The Westminster Senior Intermediate Quarterly

JANUARY-FEBRUARY-MARCH

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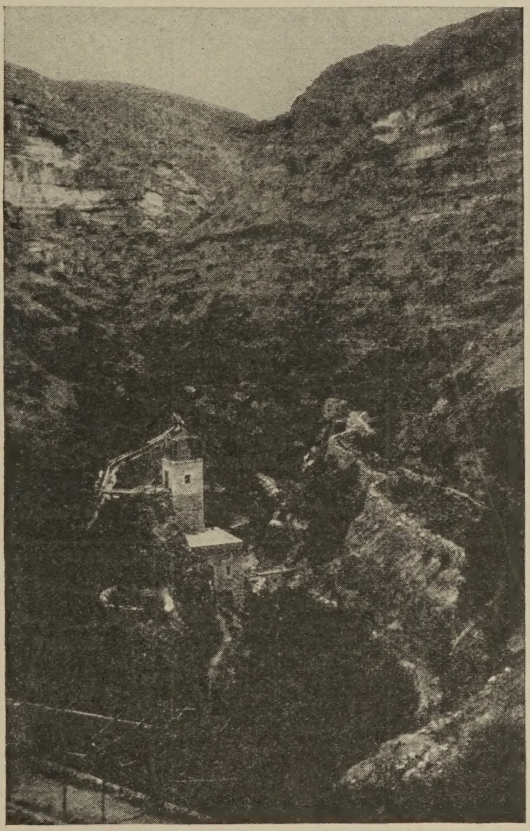

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The Westminster Senior-Intermediate Quarterly

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FOREWORD

The lessons for the next nine months are all in the Old Testament. The general topics for the first three quarters of the year are respectively, "Later Leaders and Prophets of Israel" (Northern Kingdom), "Prophets and Kings in Judah" (Southern Kingdom), and "The Exile and the Restoration." The lessons begin with the death of Solomon and continue through to the close of the Old Testament period.

The first quarter's lessons center around the history of Israel, as the Northern Kingdom is called. The second quarter's lessons trace the history of Judah. The third quarter is a study of the Exile and the Restoration. The fourth and last quarter takes us into the New Testament to the life of Christ as given in Luke's Gospel.

The Old Testament lessons therefore begin with The First Book of the Kings and follow on through the history of the Hebrew people till the coming of Jesus. Do not be satisfied with reading the text printed in the Quarterly. Read the entire story as it is given in the Bible, and when the course ends, you will be well repaid. Make this New Year a year in which you will "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Yours very sincerely,

Hugh T. Kerr

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THE REVOLT OF JEROBOAM

THE GOLDEN TEXT—"Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them."—Ex. 20: 4, 5.

TEXT OF LESSON, I Kings 12: 12-17, 26-30

For entire lesson, see I Kings 12: 1 to 13: 6

COMMON VERSION

12 ¶ So Jer-o-bo'am and all the people came to Re-ho-bo'am the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day.

13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him;

14 And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father *also* chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.

15 Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by A-hi'jah the Shi'lo-nite unto Jer-o-bo'am the son of Ne'bat.

16 ¶ So when all Is'ra-el saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in Da'vid? neither *have we* inheritance in the son of Jes'se: to your tents, O Is'ra-el: now see to thine own house, Da'vid. So Is'ra-el departed unto their tents.

17 But *as for* the children of Is'ra-el which dwelt in the cities of Ju'dah, Re-ho-bo'am reigned over them.

* * * * *

26 And Jer-o-bo'am said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of Da'vid:

27 If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Je-ru'sa-lem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Re-ho-bo'am king of Ju'dah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Re-ho-bo'am king of Ju'dah.

28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves *of* gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Je-ru'sa-lem: behold thy gods, O Is'ra-el, which brought thee up out of the land of E'gypt.

29 And he set the one in Beth'-el, and the other put he in Dan.

30 And this thing became a sin: for the people went *to worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan.

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12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come to me again the third day. 13 And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the counsel of the old men which they had given him, 14 and spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 15 So the king hearkened not unto the people; for it was a thing brought about of Jehovah, that he might establish his word, which Jehovah spake by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

16 And when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. 17 But as for the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

* * * * *

26 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now will the kingdom return to the house of David: 27 if this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem, then will the heart of his people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me, and return to Rehoboam king of Judah. 28 Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold; and he said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 29 And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. 30 And this thing became a sin; for the people went *to worship* before the one, even unto Dan.

The Time—931 B.C. **The Place**—Shechem.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, December 26	Samuel's Warning	I Sam. 8 : 10-18.
Tuesday, December 27	Foolish Counsel Followed	I Kings 12 : 6-15.
Wednesday, December 28	The Revolt Foretold	I Kings 11 : 29-39.
Thursday, December 29	The Revolt Accomplished	I Kings 12 : 16-20.
Friday, December 30	A King Humbled	Dan. 4 : 30-37.
Saturday, December 31	Rulers Are God's Ministers	Rom. 13 : 1-7.
Sunday, January 1	The Model for All Rulers	II Sam. 23 : 1-7.

DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES

14. With scorpions. Probably special and cruel whips with leaden balls, used for punishing criminals. They stung like the bite of a scorpion.

15. Establish his word. The story of the prophet's message to Jeroboam is told in I Kings 11 : 29-39. God had a plan superior to the king's foolishness.

16. All Israel. "Israel" refers to the northern part of the nation with its capital at Shechem. The capital of Judah was at Jerusalem.

28. Two calves of gold. Images in the form of young oxen. The ox had long been a symbol of deity. See Ex. 32 : 4-8.

29. Beth-el . . . Dan. Bethel was in the south, ten miles north of Jerusalem. Dan was in the north, probably at the largest source of the river Jordan.

THE LESSON STORY

The lessons for the next nine months are from the Old Testament. They begin with the story of the Divided Kingdom. The first king of Israel was Saul, and he reigned for forty years. The second king was David and in his day Israel grew great and strong. He, too, reigned for about forty years. The third king was Solomon, the son of David, and he, too, reigned for forty years. Solomon was very wise and at the same time very foolish. He forgot God and welcomed heathen religions. He was very rich, but his riches were obtained by oppression. He had many slaves and during his reign luxury and extravagance had full sway. He burdened the people with heavy taxes and exacted large revenues from them through forced labor and through taxes, until the people were ready to rebel against him and his government. During his lifetime, however, he was able to keep peace, but at his death, the people of the north under Jeroboam, demanded reform. Rehoboam, Solomon's son who had been proclaimed king, refused to grant reform and the people of the north set up their own government under Jeroboam, while Rehoboam was king in the south. The Northern Kingdom was called Israel. The Southern Kingdom was called Judah.

THE CAUSES OF THE DOWNFALL

God had told Solomon that the kingdom would be taken from his son. In I Kings 11 : 11, 12 we read, "Wherefore Jehovah said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son." Solomon had proved false to the nation by burdening the people to support a luxurious and extravagant government. He had extorted taxes and had forced thousands into slavery. He had also proved false to God by encouraging heathen religion and by marrying heathen women. God allowed Solomon to remain king over the country to the end of his life, but deprived his son of power. Sometimes sin and evil take a generation to bring forth their fruit. "God does not pay at the end of every day but in the end he pays," is an old and a true saying.

THE DEMANDS OF THE PEOPLE

I Kings 12 : 12

When Solomon died, the people of the north rose up to demand their rights. There had always been jealous feelings between the north and the south since the days of Saul and David. Solomon was succeeded by his son Rehoboam who was probably crowned king at Jerusalem. To avoid a civil war it was necessary for him also to be proclaimed and crowned king at Shechem, the chief city of the north. There the people gathered around him and with Jeroboam as their leader, demanded that Rehoboam make their burdens of taxation and service lighter. This was only fair. Jeroboam had prepared himself for leadership. Indeed God had prepared him, for he had been forewarned by a prophet by the name of Ahijah, that he himself would be king of the north. The story of Ahijah's visit to Jeroboam is full of interest and should be read. I Kings 11 : 29-39. Ahijah had rent his mantle into twelve pieces and had given ten pieces to Jeroboam, saying, "Take thee ten pieces; for thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee." Like Moses' attempt at reform, however, Jeroboam's failed, and he fled into Egypt and only returned to lead the popular rebellion when Solomon was dead.

REHOBOAM'S FOOLISH ANSWER

I Kings 12 : 13, 14

Rehoboam was about forty-one when he began to reign. His counselors were young by comparison with his father's advisers. He asked for three days to consider the request of the people of Israel that he should lighten their burdens. This was a bad start. He should have promptly replied to them in a kindly and helpful way. But he was the wrong kind of man. His mother was a heathen princess and he himself was without moral principles. He first asked the old men, the elders of the government, what he should do, and they gave him wise advice which would have enabled him to satisfy the people, if he had followed it. They said, "If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt . . . speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever." This advice evidently did not satisfy him and he turned to his own careless companions who counseled him not to lighten the burdens but to increase them. This was the opinion which Rehoboam himself held, and so after three days he said to the people, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to

your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.'' It was all very foolish and Rehoboam soon discovered that he had made a mistake. He had not asked God for help and he had despised the advice of wise and experienced men. It is always wise for young people to follow the counsel of age and of experience, and above all, it is best to test our plans by God's Word. Rehoboam was selfish, cruel, and unjust, and in the end involved himself and his country in disaster.

GOD'S PLAN FOR ISRAEL

I Kings 12 : 15

While Rehoboam planned to impose greater burdens on the people, God's purpose was to set them free and to divide the kingdom into two nations, one in the north called Israel, and one in the south called Judah. This plan had been announced to Jeroboam by Ahijah, one of God's prophets. I Kings 11: 30-32. Jeroboam had been one of Solomon's foremen. He had been made overseer over a group of workmen who were rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The prophet's words stirred his heart and, knowing the hardship to which the workmen were subjected, he organized a rebellion, but had to flee for his life to Egypt, where he remained until the death of Solomon. When he returned to his own people of the north, he resolved that the burdens must be made lighter or he would set up a new kingdom. Behind all these movements God had a plan. He had told Solomon that on account of his sin, the nation would suffer disaster and this was the working out of his will. It is as true of nations as of individuals that we reap what we sow.

ISRAEL AND JUDAH

I Kings 12 : 16, 17

When the people of Israel heard Rehoboam's insulting answer to the request of Jeroboam, they were angry. Years of oppression had made them bitter. They were ready for rebellion and knew how to set up a government of their own. The early colonists in America were in much the same position when they refused to pay the unjust taxes of the motherland. They rebelled and established their own government. So did Israel. They said, ''What portion have we in David?'' They meant Judah, the southern part, which had always been loyal to David. There had long been bitter feeling between the north and the south. They now declared open rebellion. ''To your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents.'' Rebellion was openly declared. The kingdom that had been so glorious in the reigns of Saul and David and Solomon was divided. Rehoboam was king of Judah, and Jeroboam was king of Israel.

It was an unhappy ending to a long period of unrighteousness and was the result of Solomon's idolatry and his neglect of God, and of Rehoboam's foolishness and unwillingness to take advice from those who had more experience than he.

SHECHEM

"And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king."—I King 12: 1.

THE IDOLATRY OF JEROBOAM

I Kings 12 : 26

The rebellion led by Jeroboam was a complete success. Rehoboam tried to put an end to it by sending out Adoram, one of his overseers, but the people stoned him to death and Rehoboam, the king, fled back to Jerusalem from Shechem where the conference had been held. The new nation in the north made Jeroboam king.

The capital of Israel was at Shechem and Jeroboam set about to establish his kingdom as an independent nation. He knew, however, that as long as his people went up to worship at Jerusalem, it would be difficult to do this. The Temple was at Jerusalem and there was the center of the religious

life of the people. Jeroboam, however, established two places of worship in Israel. One place was at Bethel, ten miles from Jerusalem and one at Dan, in the extreme north. Here he erected temples and ordained priests and set up in each place a calf of gold, saying, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel." The lesson says in v. 30 that "this thing became a sin." God warned the people against it and in ch. 13 : 1-6, one of God's prophets cried out against such idolatry. Jeroboam, in setting up images of young oxen as symbols of God's power, disobeyed the Second Commandment. In this way Jeroboam introduced idolatry into Israel and that idolatry was destroyed only when the nation was conquered by Assyria in 722 B.C.

Again and again the Bible speaks of "the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, wherewith he made Israel to sin." In order to make his throne secure, he turned the people's hearts from God by idolatry and thus brought about his own and his nation's downfall.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

A nation's sins find it out. The sin of Solomon bore fruit in the time of his son Rehoboam. The sin of Rehoboam brought about the rebellion of Israel, and the idolatry of Jeroboam in time overthrew Israel.

Rehoboam had a heathen mother and her influence is seen in the foolishness of her son. It is still true that a mother's influence rules the world.

It is wise for youth to be advised by experience. Rehoboam should have listened to the wisdom of the older men.

The true ruler is he who serves. Jesus himself said that he came into the world not to be served by others but to serve them.

Israel turned from God to golden calves. We, too, may leave God for some idol. We may make an idol out of pleasure, wealth, self. Whatever has first place in our lives, that is our god.

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. Why was the kingdom over which Solomon ruled divided after his death?
2. Over what country did Rehoboam rule?
3. Over what country did Jeroboam rule?
4. Of what sin was Rehoboam guilty?
5. Was Jeroboam a good or a bad king? Why?
6. How did Jeroboam lead Israel into sin?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 1. What do we most need to know?

A. We most need to know what God would have us believe and do.

Q. 2. Where do we best learn what God would have us believe and do?

A. We best learn what God would have us believe and do in the Bible.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. What complaint did the people make concerning Solomon?
2. How did Rehoboam treat the complaint of the people?
3. How had Jeroboam been prepared for leadership?
4. Why did Jeroboam set up places of worship in Bethel and in Dan?
5. What was Jeroboam's great sin?
6. What is the relation of the golden text to the lesson?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 53. Which is the third commandment?

A. The third commandment is, Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Q. 54. What is required in the third commandment?

A. The third commandment requireth the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works.

Lesson II—ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

THE GOLDEN TEXT—"But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—Matt. 6: 33.

TEXT OF LESSON, I Kings 17: 1-16

For entire lesson, see I Kings, ch. 17

COMMON VERSION

1 And E-li'jah the Tish'bite, *who was* of the inhabitants of Gil'e-ad, said unto A'hab, *As* the LORD God of Is'ra-el liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

2 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

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1 And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. 2 And the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, 3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook

3 Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Che'rith, that *is* before Jor'dan.

4 And it shall be, *that* thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there.

5 So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Che'rith, that *is* before Jor'dan.

6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.

7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

8 ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

9 Arise, get thee to Zar'e-phath, which *belongeth* to Zi'don, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

10 So he arose and went to Zar'e-phath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman *was* there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch mé, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

11 And as she was going to fetch *it*, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

12 And she said, *As* the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I *am* gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

13 And E-li'jah said unto her, Fear not; go *and* do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring *it* unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

14 For thus saith the LORD God of Is'ra-el, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.

15 And she went and did according to the saying of E-li'jah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days.

16 *And* the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the curse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by E-li'jah.

Cherith, that is before the Jordan. 4 And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. 5 So he went and did according unto the word of Jehovah; for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan. 6 And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. 7 And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.

8 And the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, 9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Sidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee. 10 So he arose and went to Zarephath; and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. 11 And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand. 12 And she said, As Jehovah thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in the jar, and a little oil in the cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. 13 And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it forth unto me, and afterward make for thee and for thy son. 14 For thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, The jar of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that Jehovah sendeth rain upon the earth. 15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days. 16 The jar of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of Jehovah, which he spake by Elijah.

The Time—About 875 B.C. **The Places**—Israel—Cherith—Zarephath.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, January 2	Elijah's Opponent	I Kings 16: 29-33.
Tuesday, January 3	Elijah's Challenge	I Kings 17: 1-7.
Wednesday, January 4	Elijah in the Widow's Home	I Kings 17: 8-16.
Thursday, January 5	Elijah Raising the Widow's Son	I Kings 17: 17-24.
Friday, January 6	Elijah's Faith to Be Our Faith	Matt. 6: 25-34.
Saturday, January 7	Elijah's God a Bountiful Provider	Ex. 16: 11-18.
Sunday, January 8	Elijah's God Our God	Ps. 62: 1-8.

DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES

1. Elijah the Tishbite. Elijah means "my God is Jehovah." He probably came from Tishbeh in Galilee, but he lived in Gilead.

3. The brook Cherith. A wadi, or watercourse, flowing into the river Jordan from the east. It would be in what was called "the wilderness."

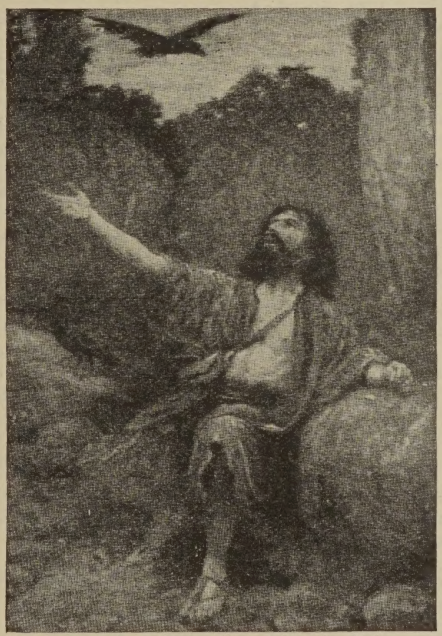
6. The ravens. In Ezek. 27 : 27, the same word is translated "dealers in . . . merchandise," and some have supposed that Arabs are meant. This is not possible. Elijah was in hiding.

8. To Zarephath. Luke 4: 26. A small village on the seacoast, about ten miles from Sidon, between Tyre and Sidon.

12. Jehovah thy God. The woman was a heathen. She recognized Elijah by his speech and his dress as a worshiper of Jehovah, of whom she had heard.

BETWEEN THE LESSONS

Our last lesson introduced us to the new kingdom of Israel under King Jeroboam. We learned that in order to separate Israel entirely from Judah, Jeroboam introduced idolatry into Israel. He set up "calves of gold," one calf at Bethel and the other at Dan. These were intended to be symbols of Jehovah's power. Gradually, however, the people of Israel fell away from Jehovah and became more and more idolatrous. The country in which they lived had always been idolatrous and it was easy for them to fall away from the true God and worship the many images of Baal which were worshiped by the Canaanites who were still in the land.



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ELIJAH AND THE RAVENS

Jeroboam, as we remember, is spoken of as the man who, by introducing idolatry, "made Israel to sin." He was followed by a succession of kings all worse than himself. Jeroboam reigned for twenty-two years and was succeeded by Nadab, of whom it is said that "he did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah." I Kings 15 : 26. Nadab reigned two years and was succeeded by Baasha, who murdered all the house of Jeroboam; of him it is written, "He did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin." I Kings 15 : 34. Baasha reigned for twenty-four years and was succeeded by Elah, his son, a drunkard who, after a reign of two years, was murdered by Zimri, his successor. Zimri, after reigning for only seven days, committed suicide by burning the house in which he had been besieged. I Kings 16 : 18. After the death of Zimri, there was civil war in Israel until Omri, the conqueror, was crowned king. He reigned for twelve years and of him it is said that he "did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, and dealt wickedly above all that were before him." I Kings 16 : 25. He was succeeded by Ahab who was king of Israel when Elijah the prophet spoke the word of the Lord given in our lesson.

Ahab reigned for twenty-two years and was a powerful and influential king. He was brave and successful in war. He made Israel prosperous and strong. He built beautiful palaces and founded cities. Nevertheless, it is written of him: "And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria." I Kings 16:31-33.

From the beginning of the reign of Jeroboam who introduced calf worship into Israel, to the beginning of the reign of Ahab, a period of sixty-two years, things had gone from bad to worse. The worship of Jehovah was well-nigh forgotten, and everywhere the worship of Baal, the god of nature, was carried on. Ahab purposed in his heart to supplant the worship of the true God with the worship of Baal and in this, he was helped and encouraged by his wife Jezebel, one of the most wicked and cruel women who ever lived. She has been called the Lady Macbeth of history. It looked as if Israel were to be given over entirely to idolatry and that God would be both forsaken and forgotten. But God has his own way of guiding both men and nations. When the darkness seemed the deepest, the light began to appear. When Ahab thought that Jehovah had been banished, lo, Elijah appeared and said, "Thus saith Jehovah."

ELIJAH THE TISHBITE

I Kings 17 : 1

Elijah appeared without announcement and vanished like a spirit. When Ahab and Jezebel thought that they had succeeded in setting up their new heathen religion, suddenly "as a clap of thunder from a cloudless sky, there swept in before them a weird-looking man, with long, flowing hair, a mantle of sheepskin round his shoulders, and a rugged staff in his hand; and before they could ask him who he was, or why he had come thither, he had flung the gage of defiance at their feet, and had said, 'As Jehovah, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.' Then, this message given, he vanished like an apparition."

There had at last been found one man who was brave and bold enough to speak out for God. We know little about him. We are told that he was a Tishbite and doubtless he came from Tishbeh in Galilee, but he lived in Gilead. His soul was on fire for God and true religion, and he became one of the most fearless of all the prophets. He was a man of steel in an iron age. "The strongest trees are found, not in sheltered nooks, but in the most exposed places, where sweeps the full fury of the storm; the hardiest flowers grow, not in the hothouse, but on the mountain side."

Those who worshiped Baal were worshipers of a nature god, but Elijah as God's messenger was to show Ahab and Jezebel, as well as the people, that not Baal, but Jehovah, was the Lord, and that he held in his keeping the power to give and to withhold the harvest and the food of man.

ELIJAH AND THE RAVENS

I Kings 17 : 2-6

Having delivered his startling message, Elijah fled for his life. He knew that both Ahab and Jezebel were tyrants at heart, and cruel, and he knew also that the country would be in the grip of a great famine, and so he was the more ready to obey the word of the Lord when he was told: "Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before the Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there." Elijah would feel at home in the lonely ravine on the east side of the Jordan. There he would find water, and there the wild ravens would, at the command of God, bring him food. The country would be searched for him, but he would be safe. It was not fear that drove Elijah into seclusion, but the word of God. God had work for him to do, and until that work was done, God's hand would shelter him from harm. So wonderfully did God provide for him that people have tried to explain away the miraculous character of the story. They have translated the word "ravens" by the word "merchants" or "Arabs." It was God's purpose to conceal Elijah, and if wandering Arabs knew his hiding place, he would not have been safe from Ahab. At any rate it was God who hid and who cared for his servant in that lonely asylum. God's promises are still rich and true for all who trust. Try to recall other promises like these:

"But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

"And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

THE OBEDIENT PROPHET

I Kings 17 : 7

We do not know how long Elijah remained in his wild hiding place. The story merely says that "after a while . . . the brook dried up." When the water ceased to flow, Elijah would know that the drought was upon the land. In ch. 18 : 1, we read that the famine lasted for at least three years, and in Luke 4 : 25 and James 5 : 17, that it lasted three years and six months. The time would seem long for Elijah. It is harder to wait than to work. The soldiers in France found waiting harder than fighting. But sometimes God asks his soldiers to wait. He has something for them to learn, and doubtless God had something for Elijah to learn during his long period of solitude. In his blindness, John Milton wrote the words:

. . . God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best; his state
Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.

Elijah and many of God's servants have had to learn the lesson that "they also serve who only stand and wait."

ELIJAH AT ZAREPHATH

I Kings 17 : 8, 9

When Elijah was obliged to leave his hiding place on the east side of the Jordan, God guided him to the village of Zarephath on the coast of the Mediterranean, between the cities of Tyre and Sidon. When God spoke Elijah obeyed. He was the servant of God, and God's word was his law. The command was definite—"Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Sidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow there to sustain thee." How he made the journey undiscovered we are not told, but we are told why he was sent to one poor widow who lived beyond the borders of Israel. Where are we told this? Jesus tells us why Elijah was sent to the widow of Zarephath. Speaking at Nazareth in his own home synagogue, he said, "But of a truth I say unto you, There were many widows in Israel in the days

of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when there came a great famine over all the land; and unto none of them was Elijah sent, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.'' Luke 4 : 25, 26. Jesus' own people had rejected him; therefore he would turn to those beyond his own nation, just as in the days of Elijah when the people of Israel turned away from God, God revealed himself to a poor widow beyond the bounds of Israel. This was what Jesus meant, and it was a warning to the people of his day that if they refused to hear God's message, God would send the message to others who would hear.

THE WIDOW AND HER SON

I Kings 17 : 10-12

We are not told how Elijah recognized the widow to whom God had sent him, but when he came to the gate of the city, he beheld a poor woman gathering sticks, and his heart was somehow drawn to her. She was very poor and very sad. When the prophet asked her for water, she gladly consented to bring him what he asked. He had had a long and weary journey, and she was kind and generous. As she went for water he bade her bring him something to eat also, and then she told her tragic story. ''As Jehovah thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in the jar, and a little oil in the cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.'' Her words would sound like words of doom to the prophet and he would say: ''Is this she to whom God has sent me? How, indeed, can she support me when she cannot support herself?'' Thus God tested his faith and, when it was tested, it was found to be true.

THE UNFAILING SUPPLY

I Kings 17 : 13-16

Elijah's faith grew only stronger as difficulties increased, and he answered the pathetic story of the widow by saying: ''Fear not; go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it forth unto me, and afterward make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, The jar of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that Jehovah sendeth rain upon the earth.'' Something in the manner of Elijah won the woman's confidence, and she went and did what he had told her to do, and lo, the promise came true, and all through the dark days of famine she had enough for herself and for her son as well as for the man of God who had come so suddenly to her relief. Not only did Elijah bring her the blessing of food, but he brought her joy and happiness, for when her son died, he restored him to life and won her to faith in Jehovah, the true God. The story of this miracle should be read in vs. 17-24. In this wonderful story, God teaches us that we get by giving. It was in the mind of the writer of the familiar verses which have been set to music and which should be memorized.

''Is thy cruse of comfort wasting? rise and share it with another,
And through all the years of famine it shall serve thee and thy brother.

''Love divine will fill thy storehouse, or thy handful still renew;
Scanty fare for one will often make a royal feast for two.

''For the heart grows rich in giving; all its wealth is living grain;
Seeds, which mildew in the garner, scattered, fill with gold the plain.

''Is thy burden hard and heavy? do thy steps drag wearily?
Help to bear thy brother's burden; God will bear both it and thee.''

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. Name the kings of Israel between Jeroboam and Ahab.
2. Why did God punish Israel with famine?
3. How long did the famine last?
4. Where was Elijah's first hiding place and how was he cared for?
5. Why did Elijah go to a heathen woman for safety?
6. What blessings did Elijah bring to her home?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 3. What is the Bible?

A. The Bible is the Word of God, a collection of books, written by men who were guided by God to teach us about himself and his will.

Q. 4. How is the Bible divided?

A. The Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament containing thirty-nine books and the New Testament containing twenty-seven books.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. What was Ahab's character?
2. What sin had Israel committed?
3. Why did Elijah hide himself at the brook Cherith?
4. Why is Elijah called a prophet?
5. How did Elijah test the faith of the woman at Zarephath?
6. How did God test Elijah's faith both at Cherith and at Zarephath?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 55. What is forbidden in the third commandment?

A. The third commandment forbiddeth all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God maketh himself known.

ELIJAH'S CHALLENGE OF BAAL WORSHIP

THE GOLDEN TEXT—"This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith."—I John 5: 4.

TEXT OF LESSON, I Kings 18: 20-24, 30, 36-39

For entire lesson, see I Kings, ch. 18

COMMON VERSION

20 So A'hab sent unto all the children of Is'ra-el, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Car'mel.

21 And E-li'jah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Ba'al, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

22 Then said E-li'jah unto the people, I, *even* I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Ba'al's prophets *are* four hundred and fifty men.

23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under:* and I will dress the other bullock, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under:*

24 And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

* * * * *

30 And E-li'jah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down.

* * * * *

36 And it came to pass at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that E-li'jah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of A'braham, I'saac, and of Is'ra-el, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Is'ra-el, and *that* I *am* thy servant, and *that* I have done all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that *was* in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God.

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20 So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. 21 And Elijah came near unto all the people, and said, How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. 22 Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, am left a prophet of Jehovah; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. 23 Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on the wood, and put no fire under. 24 And call ye on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of Jehovah: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

* * * * *

30 And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me; and all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of Jehovah that was thrown down.

* * * * *

36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the *evening* oblation, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, O Jehovah, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. 37 Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that thou, Jehovah, art God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again. 38 Then the fire of Jehovah fell, and consumed the burnt-offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God.

The Time—In the reign of Ahab 875-853 B.C. **The Place**—Mount Carmel.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, January 9	Elijah's Word Tested	I Kings 18: 7-15.
Tuesday, January 10	The Challenge	I Kings 18: 16-20.
Wednesday, January 11	The Defeat	I Kings 18: 21-29.
Thursday, January 12	The Victory	I Kings 18: 30-39.
Friday, January 13	Joshua's Character Test	Josh. 24: 14-21.
Saturday, January 14	Paul's Character Test	Eph. 6: 10-20
Sunday, January 15	The King Enthroned	Ps. 2: 1-3, 7-12.

DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES

20. Mount Carmel. A range of hills on the coast of Palestine, rising at the highest point over seventeen hundred feet above the sea.

21. Limping. The Greek version translates "go lame on both knees." It refers to the people's attempt to serve both Baal and Jehovah.

22. I, even I only. There were other prophets alive of whom Elijah did not know, but they were silent at this time. See chs. 18: 13; 20: 13; 22: 6.

30. Thrown down. There had been an altar to Jehovah on Mount Carmel, but the worship of Baal had led to its neglect and overthrow.

40. The brook Kishon. The prophets of Baal were slain at the foot of Mount Carmel, beside the stream Kishon that flows into the Mediterranean.

THE LESSON STORY

The very first thing to do is to read the whole story about Elijah's controversy with Ahab, which is told in ch. 18 and continues through into ch. 19. After Elijah had been in hiding for three years and had been sought for in all the surrounding country by Ahab, suddenly he appeared in the king's presence. First he showed himself to Obadiah, a loyal believer in God. Obadiah was overwhelmed by the sight of Elijah, and at first refused to announce his presence to the king, fearing that the prophet would again disappear and that he would be punished. Obadiah, however, was assured that Elijah had really come to meet the king. The meeting between Ahab and Elijah was very dramatic. Obadiah had told Elijah that every nation had been searched for him, and Ahab had not forgotten the words of the prophet which heralded the awful drought and famine. When Ahab saw Elijah, he exclaimed, "Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?" Ch. 18 : 17. Elijah, however, was not responsible for Israel's trouble and he bravely answered the king, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of Jehovah, and thou hast followed the Baalim." Ahab knew that Elijah spoke the truth, and had nothing to say in reply. The prophet was master of the situation, and the famine had humbled Ahab and fear held his heart. Elijah demanded that there and then a final test be made. He ordered Ahab to take to Mount Carmel the four hundred and fifty prophets of the god Baal and the four hundred prophets of the goddess Asherah, and meet him there. Elijah intended once and for all to settle the question of the supremacy of Jehovah. There the fire of God revealed the fact that Baal was powerless, while Jehovah was the only living and true God.

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D. Mastroianni

ELIJAH AND THE PROPHETS OF BAAL

ON MOUNT CARMEL

I Kings 18 : 20

Elijah chose a historic place for his great contest with the false prophets. Look on the map and you will see Mount Carmel jutting out into the sea. On this mountain were placed the standards of the crusaders and here, too, Napoleon flung out his flags to the breeze. But of all contests this, between the religion of Baal and the faith of Jehovah, is the most important and the most memorable.

We are not told how many people gathered on that mountain top. There must have been thousands and thousands, for all the land had been stirred by the famine and to see Elijah who had spoken the prophetic word to the king was enough to bring out multitudes of people from far and near. Elijah stood alone among the followers of Jehovah. The prophets of the god Baal numbered four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the goddess Asherah four hundred, and among these false prophets Ahab the king and Queen Jezebel took their places. It was a momentous occasion for the people of Israel.

THE CHARGE

I Kings 18 : 21

When all the people had gathered and the false prophets had taken their places, Elijah stood forth to speak. He was all alone. No one stood with him, but he was not afraid, for he was God's servant and God had put power in his hands. Evil is always cowardly. Righteousness is always fearless. Perhaps Ahab thought that Elijah would announce the end of the famine and the coming of rain. But he did no such thing. There was something to do first. The people must first be shown the folly of worshiping a false god like Baal. They must be made to decide between Jehovah and Baal once and for all, and so, standing before king and priests and people, he said: "How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." However "the people answered him not a word." Elijah called for decision. They were willing to serve both Baal and Jehovah. Elijah told them that was impossible. They must make their choice. If they wanted Baal, then they should choose Baal. He demanded decision. He demanded honesty and not hypocrisy. It was the same demand that Jesus made when he said, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." God will not take second place. He must reign supreme and reign alone. When we love pleasure, or wealth, or fame, or sin, rather than God, we, too, choose Baal instead of Jehovah.

THE CHALLENGE

I Kings 18 : 22-24

To force the people to a decision, Elijah proposed a contest. He was alone. He served Jehovah. Baal and Asherah had eight hundred and fifty priests and prophets. Elijah asked for two bullocks, one for himself and one for the false prophets. The bullocks were to be prepared for sacrifice and placed one on the altar of Baal and the other on the all but ruined and destroyed altar of Jehovah. It would seem that there were upon Mount Carmel altars both to Baal and to Jehovah, but the altar to Jehovah was neglected and had to be rebuilt for the sacrifice. When the sacrifice was ready, the prophets of Baal were to call upon their god to send fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, and Elijah was to call upon Jehovah, "and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God."

It was a simple but effective challenge. Baal was believed to preside over the powers of nature, and fire would be but his messenger. Jehovah had more than once shown his power by revealing his presence in fire. Lev. 9 : 24; I Chron. 21 : 26; II Chron. 7 : 1. On the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came like unto tongues of flame and we, remembering that, sing:

"Come as the fire; and purge our hearts,
Like sacrificial flame:
Let our whole soul an offering be
To our Redeemer's name."

THE FAILURE OF BAAL

I Kings 18 : 25-29

The people were pleased with Elijah's challenge. They said, "It is well spoken." V. 24. We are not told what the priests and prophets of Baal thought or said. They doubtless would have avoided the issue, but Elijah's words were fair and the people were eager to look on at such a contest. Elijah permitted the prophets of Baal to make the first test. They prepared the bullock for the sacrifice and then began to pray to their god. From morning till noon they cried, "O Baal, hear us." But no answer came. The sacrifice remained unconsumed. No fire came down from heaven. It was a wild scene. They leaped and danced around the altar, cutting themselves, and continued to do so until the hour of evening sacrifice, "but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." The people looked on in amazement and Elijah ridiculed both them and their false god. When it was past noon, Elijah mocked them saying, "Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked." They were poor, ignorant, deluded people—false prophets of a false god. We feel a sense of pity for them. False religions do not satisfy their worshipers. They deceive and betray them.

THE ANSWER OF JEHOVAH

I Kings 18 : 30-38

As the evening was drawing to a close, it was evident that no answer would be received from Baal. Then Elijah took his place. He restored the broken altar of Jehovah placing upon it twelve stones that represented the twelve tribes of Israel. When he had made a trench around the altar he prepared the bullocks, and had four jars of water poured three times upon the sacrifice and the altar until the trench overflowed. Elijah would convince the people that no pretense existed, that there was no deception. If fire came, it would come from above and not from beneath. When all was ready and the hour of the evening sacrifice had come, Elijah drew near to the altar and lifted up his voice in a simple and beautiful prayer. Study the words of the prayer in vs. 36, 37. No sooner had Elijah finished his prayer than fire fell from heaven and in a few minutes everything about the altar—sacrifice, wood, stones, dust, and even the water—was consumed. God had answered quickly and completely the prayer of his servant. God always answers prayer, but in his wisdom, he does not always answer it exactly in accordance with the terms of the request. This, however, was a supreme crisis in Israel's history. The truest

prayer is the prayer of Jesus, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

MERCY AND JUDGMENT

I Kings 18 : 39, 40

It was a dramatic moment when the fire of God fell upon the sacrifice. The priests and prophets of Baal were silenced. The people were amazed and overwhelmed and cried out: "Jehovah, he is God; Jehovah, he is God." The false religion of Baal had been struck a deathblow. The people were convinced by the miracle that Jehovah was indeed God and that the claims of Baal were false. So angry were they with the priests and prophets of this false religion, that, following the command of Elijah, they took them to the foot of the hill beside the brook Kishon and slew them there. It was a terrible punishment. But we must remember that these prophets were not only false to the faith of Jehovah, but they were traitors to their country. They were selling their land to the idolatrous foreigner, and traitors even now are punished with death.

THE GREAT DECISION

We, too, face Elijah's challenge, "If Jehovah be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." Baal is the god of the world. He goes by many names. Sometimes he is called mammon, or money, or self, or pleasure, or ambition, or fashion, or fame, or selfishness. What we love and serve, that is the thing we worship. God alone is worthy of our worship. He alone hears prayer. He alone conquers sin. He alone is able to save. Let us settle the matter for ourselves. Let us make God our first and only choice.

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. What is meant by Baal worship?
2. How long had the famine lasted?
3. What test did Elijah propose to the prophets of Baal?
4. How long did the prophets of Baal pray to their god?
5. What answer did God give to Elijah's prayer?
6. What effect had the miracle upon the people of Israel?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 5. What does the Bible teach about God?

A. The Bible teaches that God is our heavenly Father who made all things and rules over all in wisdom and righteousness and love.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. Why was Elijah the only prophet of Jehovah on Mount Carmel?
2. Did the prophets of Baal welcome Elijah's challenge?
3. Why did Elijah pour water on the altar?
4. Why had the altar of Jehovah to be restored?
5. Compare the prayers of Baal's prophets with the prayer of Elijah.
6. Why were the prophets of Baal put to death?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 56. What is the reason annexed to the third commandment?

A. The reason annexed to the third commandment is, that however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment.

Lesson IV—ELIJAH'S FLIGHT AND RETURN

THE GOLDEN TEXT—"I waited patiently for Jehovah;
And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry."—Ps. 40: 1.

TEXT OF LESSON, I Kings 19: 9-18

For entire lesson, see I Kings, ch. 19

COMMON VERSION

9 ¶ And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, E-li'jah?

10 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Is'ra-el have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD

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9 And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of Jehovah came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? 10 And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 11 And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before Jehovah. And, behold, Jehovah passed by, and a great and strong

passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake:

12 And after the earthquake a fire; *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.

13 And it was *so*, when E-li'jah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, *there came* a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, E-li'jah?

14 And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Isra'el have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15 And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Da-mas'cus: and when thou comest, anoint Haz'a-el *to be* king over Syr'i-a:

16 And Je'hu the son of Nim'shi shalt thou anoint *to be* king over Is'ra-el: and E-li'sha the son of Sha'phat of A'bel-me-ho'lah shalt thou anoint *to be* prophet in thy room.

17 And it shall come to pass, *that* him that escapeth the sword of Haz'a-el shall Je'hu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Je'hu shall E-li'sha slay.

18 Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Is'ra-el, all the knees which have not bowed unto Ba'al, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before Jehovah; but Jehovah was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but Jehovah was not in the earthquake: 12 and after the earthquake a fire; but Jehovah was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. 13 And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? 14 And he said, I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.

15 And Jehovah said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, thou shalt anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; 16 and Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. 17 And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. 18 Yet will I leave *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

The Time—In the reign of Ahab, 875-853 B.C.

The Place—Mount Horeb.

DAILY HOME READINGS

Date	Title	Reference
Monday, January 16	The Prophet Triumphant	I Kings 18: 41-46.
Tuesday, January 17	The Prophet Despondent	I Kings 19: 1-8.
Wednesday, January 18	The Prophet Encouraged	I Kings 19: 9-18.
Thursday, January 19	Discouraged in Service	Num. 11: 10-15.
Friday, January 20	Unappreciated Service	Ezek. 2: 3-7.
Saturday, January 21	Security in Service	Acts 18: 1-11.
Sunday, January 22	Our Inspiration and Our Help	Ps. 42: 6-11.

DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES

9. Unto a cave. In Mount Horeb, or Sinai, the place where Moses saw the glory of God and received the revelation of the Law.

11. Jehovah passed by. All the experiences of Elijah on the mount were revelations of God to him.

12. A still small voice. See margin. "A sound of gentle stillness." See Job 4 : 16. God revealed himself best of all in the quiet calm after the storm.

15. Hazael. A wicked, treacherous king of Syria. See II Kings 8 : 7-15. He bitterly oppressed Israel. See II Kings 10 : 32; 12 : 17, 18; 13 : 4-7.

16. Jehu. Jehu was anointed king by a prophet sent by Elijah's successor, Elisha. He destroyed the house of Ahab and the priests of Baal. II Kings, ch. 9. **Elisha.** Elijah's successor, whose call to that office is told in the verses following this lesson. I Kings 19: 19-21.

BETWEEN THE LESSONS

If you go back to the story of our last lesson you will remember that after the great victory over the false religion of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah slew all the prophets of Baal at the brook Kishon. Elijah thought that by so doing he would destroy the worship of Baal, but in this he was mistaken. There was one person who was neither convinced

nor converted by the miracle of the sacrificial fire, and that was Queen Jezebel.

Before leaving the mountain, Elijah prayed that rain might come and the famine end. While he continued to pray with his face between his knees, his servant went six times to the top of the mountain to see if there was any sign of rain. There was no sign. When he went the seventh time he returned saying, "Behold, there ariseth a cloud out of the sea, as small as a man's hand." Then Elijah knew that it was the sign of the coming rainstorm and he sent word to Ahab the king, "Make ready thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not." In a little while the heavens were black and the rain fell in torrents and, wrapping his mantle around him, Elijah, with supernatural strength, ran on ahead of the king's chariot to Jezreel, the capital city. Where Elijah went or how long he stayed in Jezreel we are not told, but little time elapsed before the anger of Jezebel reached him. When the queen, who was a worshiper of Baal, heard what had happened to her priests, she sent this message to Elijah: "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time." She was cruel and strong, and her message terrified Elijah and he fled in haste from the city.

ELIJAH'S SUDDEN FLIGHT

I Kings 19 : 1-8

(These verses are not printed, but they connect this lesson with the preceding lesson.)

Fear smote Elijah's heart. The story says that "he arose, and went for his life," and rested not till he was beyond Israel, at Beer-sheba in the land of Judah beyond the reach of Jezebel. Read the story in I Kings 19 : 1-8. Why should Elijah have feared Jezebel when he was so fearless before Ahab and the people and priests of Baal? On Mount Carmel he stood alone, a hero, and now he was fleeing from the threat of a woman! Why did he not defy her in the name of God? We must remember that Elijah was human. He had been under a great strain. He was tired and weary and ready to collapse. Men like Elijah are apt to have reactions. He was like Peter who one hour drew his sword to defend Jesus and the next hour betrayed and deserted him. Elijah needed rest, and we shall see how God ministered to his need.

If you look on the map you will see that Beer-sheba lies to the south of Judah, on the very edge of civilization. It was the extreme end of Judah. It was common to speak of "from Dan to Beer-sheba" as marking the limits of the land. Elijah, leaving his servant, went on, a day's journey into the wilderness, in order to be alone with God. He needed God. Under a juniper tree, a shrub that grew about ten or twelve feet high, Elijah sat down, sad of heart. Was this the end of all his work? Was Baal worship after all to continue? Was Jezebel stronger than God? He was discouraged and was ready to give up his work in despair. He asked God that he might die. It was a strange prayer. "It is enough; now, O Jehovah, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." No answer came. God waited. A mother does not try to reason with a fretful, peevish child. She puts him to sleep. So Elijah slept, perhaps for hours. Then an angel touched him and said, "Arise and eat," and beside him he saw "a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water." After he had eaten, again he slept and again he was told to eat. He had been hungry and weary and God had given him both food and rest. How wise and kind God is! Elijah's strength was revived and he went a distance of about one hundred and eighty miles to Mount Horeb, or Sinai, where God had met with Moses and where he hoped God would meet and speak with him.

GOD QUESTIONS ELIJAH

I Kings 19 : 9, 10

Elijah reached some wild spot on Mount Horeb, and took up his abode in a cave. He would think much about Moses and the giving of the Law. This same Mount Horeb, known better by the name "Sinai," was the scene of Israel's greatest revelation of God. Elijah would wonder in his own heart, and would also ask God, if Baal worship was to supplant the worship of the true God, made known through Moses. While he thought and prayed, God spoke to him and said, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Perhaps it was the question he had been asking himself. He was needed back in Israel where he had overthrown Baal worship. Why had he fled? Was he afraid of Jezebel? Was he weary of serving God? Why had he traveled all the way to Sinai and left Israel without his help at the very hour when help was needed? His answer to God's question was peevish. Elijah felt hurt. He was egotistic; that is, he thought that he was the only one who cared about God and the true religion, so he said, "I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." His answer contained both fear and selfishness and was unlike Elijah at his best. But all great men have had times of discouragement. John the Baptist in prison sent a message to Jesus, saying, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" Jesus was kind to John even as God was kind to Elijah. The psalmist speaks of the same experience.

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
And why art thou disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him
For the help of his countenance."

GOD ANSWERS ELIJAH

I Kings 19 : 11-13

Read the story of God's revelation to Elijah and then read the story of God's revelation to Moses which took place on this same mountain, found in Ex. 33 : 17-23. Elijah waited in the cave while there came a wind, and then an earthquake, and then a fire, and last a "still small voice." Elijah was not moved by the wind or the earthquake or the fire, but when God spoke in "a voice of gentle stillness," Elijah knew and understood, and, wrapping his face in his mantle so that he might not see God lest he die, he stood at the entrance of the cave and worshiped.

In this wonderful revelation, one of the most wonderful in the Bible, God taught Elijah one of the greatest lessons any man can learn. Elijah was a man of the storm, the earthquake, the fire. He was a reformer. He had sought to overthrow a false religion by force. He had slain with the sword those who had opposed him and it had all been done righteously, in a righteous cause. But Elijah knew that he had not succeeded. His discouragement came not only because of his own weariness but because he saw Jezebel and the people returning again to Baal. God showed Elijah that he was not merely the God of the fire and the storm and the earthquake, but also the God of the "still small voice." There is a better way than force. Love is that better way. We overcome evil with good. Elijah had tried force and famine and fear, and had left Jezebel still defiant and the people ready to turn again to Baal. The "still small voice" is the better way. It is the way of Jesus. Calvary is better than Sinai.

When Jesus began his ministry he announced his purpose. He did not come as John the Baptist came, whose symbol was fire and an ax, but he came as the messenger of God, filled with the spirit of love.

"He shall not strive, nor cry aloud;
Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets.
A bruised reed shall he not break,
And smoking flax shall he not quench,
Till he send forth judgment unto victory.
And in his name shall the Gentiles hope."

It is a lesson we, too, should learn. God's best work is done quietly. Let this then be our prayer:

"Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm."

GOD COMMISSIONS ELIJAH

I Kings 19 : 14-18

When Elijah had been humbled, God spoke to him a second time saying, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" and again Elijah answered in the same words. We can imagine however, that the tone of voice in which he said these same words was very different. He was not vain now, but humble. He was so humble that he was ready to despair of himself. He felt that he was alone, that his work was done, and that it would be better for him to die. After the victory on Mount Carmel, Elijah felt that truth had triumphed, but in a few days there had been a reaction. "The facile crowd has returned to its impure rites again, not one voice daring to raise itself on the Lord's side —the kingdom which seemed the Lord's not merely thrown back, but hopelessly Baal's; and all his [Elijah's] efforts lost. And so his mind falls suddenly from the pinnacle of triumph and jubilation to the low, dismal swamp of dejection and fear."

But God had work for Elijah to do. God had treated Elijah as if he had been sick. He had given him rest and food, and now he called him to work. Work is God's cure for doubt and discouragement. Elijah was told that there were tasks awaiting him, and so God commissioned him to anoint Hazael over Syria and Jehu over Israel and that he was to commission Elisha as his successor. Elijah did not do all that he was here told to do, but in time, through his successor, it was accomplished. Elijah had complained that he only was left among the prophets, and now God showed him that Elisha was ready to stand at his side and to take his place when his work was done, and, instead of being the only loyal person left, God had seven thousand who had remained absolutely true to the true religion of Israel. We are not told how Elijah felt after God had ministered to him on Mount Horeb, but doubtless he had taken new courage and was ready to go back and fight the good fight of faith. Some one has said, "Distrust of self and confidence in God are the two mystic wings of the soul by which we rise to nobler living." Elijah was taught to distrust himself and to trust in the Lord forever. "They that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."

WHAT THE LESSON TEACHES

Temptation often follows victory. After Carmel came the wilderness. After the baptism at the Jordan, Jesus was led up to be tempted of the Devil.

God deals with his discouraged servants in a beautiful and natural way. He gave Elijah rest and food and, after worship and prayer, sent him back to work.

God's work is best done quietly. Noise and tumult are not so powerful as silence and a quiet heart. In the power house, silence reigns. God's power, like nature, works quietly.

"God buries his workers but carries on his work." God had Elisha ready when Elijah must lay down his work.

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. What effect had the Carmel victory on Ahab and Jezebel?
2. Why did Elijah flee from Jezebel?
3. What led to Elijah's discouragement?
4. How did God answer Elijah's request that he might die?
5. Why is God best revealed in the "still small voice"?
6. What work did God give Elijah?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 6. Is there more than one God?

A. There is only one God, the living and true God; yet in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. Was Elijah right in fleeing from Israel?
2. What led Elijah to the point of despair?
3. Was God angry with him?
4. Why did Elijah go to Mount Horeb?
5. What did the revelation of "the still small voice" mean?
6. How did God show his confidence in Elijah?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 57. Which is the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment is, *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the* LORD *thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the* LORD *made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the* LORD *blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

Lesson V—ELIJAH IN NABOTH'S VINEYARD

THE GOLDEN TEXT—"Be sure your sin will find you out."—Num. 32: 23.

TEXT OF LESSON, I Kings 21: 7-10, 16-20

For entire lesson, see I Kings, ch. 21

COMMON VERSION

7 And Jez'e-bel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Is'ra-el? arise, *and* eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Na'both the Jez're-el-ite.

8 So she wrote letters in A'hab's name, and sealed *them* with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that *were* in his city, dwelling with Na'both.

9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Na'both on high among the people:

10 And set two men, sons of Be'li-al, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And *then* carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

* * * * *

16 And it came to pass, when A'hab heard that Na'both was dead, that A'hab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Na'both the Jez're-el-ite, to take possession of it.

17 ¶ And the word of the LORD came to E-li'jah the Tish'bite, saying,

18 Arise, go down to meet A'hab king of Is'ra-el, which *is* in Sa-ma'ri-a: behold, *he is* in the vineyard of Na'both, whither he is gone down to possess it.

19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs

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7 And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. 8 So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, *and* that dwelt with Naboth. 9 And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: 10 and set two men, base fellows, before him, and let them bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst curse God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him to death.

* * * * *

16 And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

17 And the word of Jehovah came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18 Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who dwelleth in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to take possession of it. 19 And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, In the place where dogs licked the

licked the blood of Na'both shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

20 And A'hab said to E-li'jah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found *thee:* because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.

blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. 20 And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah.

The Place—Jezreel.

The Time—In the reign of Ahab, 875-853 B.C.

DAILY HOME READINGS

Date	Title	Reference
Monday, January 23	Covetousness Brings Murder	I Kings 21: 5-14.
Tuesday, January 24	Covetousness Brings Judgment	I Kings 21: 17-26.
Wednesday, January 25	Covetousness Described	Amos 8: 4-10.
Thursday, January 26	An Example of Covetousness	Josh. 7: 16-22.
Friday, January 27	Covetousness Punished	II Kings 5: 20-27
Saturday, January 28	Covetousness Renounced	I Tim. 6: 1-11.
Sunday, January 29	The Joy of Deliverance	Psalm 43.

DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES

7. The vineyard of Naboth. Naboth lived at Jezreel, which was one of Ahab's capitals.

9. Proclaim a fast. Jezebel called for humiliation before God because of the anger of God resting upon the country on account of the crime of Naboth. This was her false charge.

10. Two men. The number of witnesses required by law. See Deut. 17 : 6; Matt. 26 : 60.

18. Samaria. Ahab had two residences. One was at Samaria, and the other was at Jezreel. Samaria stands one thousand feet higher than Jezreel.

BETWEEN THE LESSONS

It is not possible to follow in order of time the events of Elijah's life. His appointment of Elisha as his successor did not mean that he himself would cease to speak and work for the nation and for God.

Between the lesson of last week and this lesson there is a very interesting story. It is thrillingly interesting and every pupil should read it. Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, with thirty-two other kings, besieged Samaria and fought against Ahab. Twice he attempted to defeat Israel and twice he failed, and the second time he not only failed, but was himself captured. Ahab treated Ben-hadad with great mercy, and for this he was condemned by an unnamed prophet. The whole story is interesting and gives us the character of Ahab in a new light. It shows us that even a bad man may have many likable things about him.

THE VINEYARD OF NABOTH

I Kings 21 : 1-4

We know very little about Naboth. He lived in Jezreel where Ahab had one of his palaces. He was doubtless a man of distinction and owned a vineyard which he had inherited from his fathers. This vineyard was near the palace, and the king wanted to buy it because it joined his own land. The request was perfectly proper, and Ahab proposed to pay for it whatever was asked. But Naboth did not wish to sell. He had reasons for not selling. It had been his father's home and had been in the family for generations, and according to the Jewish Law, he should not part with it. See Lev. 25 : 23; Num. 36 : 7. So he refused to part with the land, and knowing that he dared not override the law of the land and the rights of Naboth, Ahab was "heavy and displeased," and went to the palace and lay down upon his bed and refused to eat.

How unlike a king! It only shows that a covetous heart is never satisfied. Because he had much, he wanted more. He was unhappy because while he had much, he could not have all. Jesus said, "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

THE WICKED JEZEBEL

I Kings 21: 5-7

Whether Ahab acted as he did in order to attract the sympathy of Jezebel, or whether he was in reality overcome by being thwarted in his plans, does not appear, but the outcome of his conduct was that Jezebel rebuked him for his weakness. She said, "Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel?" By this she meant that if Ahab were indeed king, he ought to show his authority and not allow an ordinary man, one of his subjects, to stand in his way. She encouraged him, saying, "Arise, and eat bread, and let thy heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard." She did not tell Ahab how she would obtain it, neither did Ahab ask, but, knowing her character, he must have known that she would let nothing stand in her way. In so consenting to let her do as she pleased, Ahab became a partner in her crime, for what we do through some one else, we ourselves do. Jezebel was stronger than Ahab. She was cruel, bold, fearless in doing evil. She was like Lady

Macbeth in Shakspere, who, when Macbeth suggested that they might fail in their bad enterprise, said, "But screw your courage to the sticking place, and we'll not fail."

JEZEBEL'S WICKED PLOT

I Kings 21 : 8-15

The plot by which Jezebel planned to obtain the vineyard was both brutal and shameless. She wrote letters to which she herself signed the king's name, using his royal seal. That was wrong. That is what is called forgery and to-day men go to the penitentiary for that crime. She sent these letters to the elders and the nobles of Jezreel and bade them do what she said. That was wrong. Because they feared Jezebel, she knew that they would not dare disobey her. She used her power for an evil purpose. She asked the nobles to bring a charge against Naboth. She told them to say that Naboth had cursed God and the king. That was wrong. Naboth had done no such thing. She of course knew this, and commanded the nobles to secure two worthless men as witnesses who would swear to a lie. You will remember that false witnesses testified against Jesus. This, of course, was wrong. This is what is called to-day perjury, and is punished with imprisonment. Then she commanded the nobles to proclaim a fast. This meant that some great evil had been done and the name of God had been dishonored. This was hypocrisy on the part of Jezebel, for she was using religion as a cloak for her sin and her awful crime. The crowning crime of Jezebel was that when this false testimony was given, Naboth was to be carried out of the city and stoned to death. Jezebel had everything planned according to the Jewish Law. Blasphemy was punished with stoning. Two witnesses were required and the death penalty was to be inflicted outside of the city. It was all done as she directed, and Naboth, innocent and apparently silent, was killed. The law gave the property of an executed criminal to the king, and so the vineyard of Naboth became Ahab's. It was all so simply done that Jezebel probably smiled at her own cleverness. Count up her crimes. She had been guilty of forgery, of perjury, of hypocrisy, of treachery, and of murder.

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ELIJAH AND AHAB

AHAB AND ELIJAH

I Kings 21 : 16-20

We despise Jezebel for her wickedness and we despise Ahab for his weakness. He did not denounce the crime that gave him possession of the vineyard. He doubtless knew what had been done, but he made no protest, and when all was over he went forth to take possession of the murdered man's property. His conscience was not quite at ease, however, as appears later in the story. The scene of the meeting of Ahab and Elijah is very dramatic. It reminds us of Elijah's second appearance to Ahab. I Kings 18: 17. Elijah appeared before Ahab just when he set foot in the vineyard of Naboth. Doubtless the story had been given wide publicity, and the people would be aroused and angry. When Ahab saw Elijah, all his sin rose up before him and he said, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" and Elijah answered, "I have found thee." Elijah had proved to Ahab in his first conflict with him that Jehovah was the God of power and now he was to assert and proclaim him as the God of righteousness. This was Elijah's great mission. God would by no means clear the guilty. God is righteous in all his ways. Sin always and everywhere brings forth death. Elijah was Ahab's enemy because of Ahab's sin. In the presence of goodness and purity, sin is ill at ease. In the presence of Jesus, Judas was always face to face with his sin. Conscience acts the part of Elijah for us. Conscience brings us face to face with our sin, and we can find peace only by confession. Here are some great sentences about conscience.

"Conscience is a thousand swords."
"Conscience is the chamber of justice."
"The torture of a bad conscience is the hell of a living soul."
"The most exacting jailer is our own conscience."
"Conscience warns us as a friend before it punishes us as a judge."
"A guilty conscience is like a whirlpool."

The words of the golden text are as true for us as for Ahab, "Be sure your sin will find you out."

Elijah not only brought Ahab face to face with his sin, but he also brought him face to face with his punishment. The awful doom of Ahab and Jezebel is pointed out in terrible words. "Thus saith Jehovah, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine." Later in the story Elijah says: "And of Jezebel also spake Jehovah, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the birds of the heavens eat." These words of judgment sank like lead into the heart of Ahab and he "rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly." Because of his repentance God delayed the punishment. Repentance always and everywhere brings forgiveness, but even when sin is forgiven it still brings forth suffering and harm. Ahab was not without his good qualities but he was weak and permitted himself to be led into evil by Jezebel who had no such restraining conscience.

For the tragedy that befell the house of Ahab some years after this prophecy of Elijah, read the end of Ahab as told in I Kings 22 : 37, 38. "So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. And they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood." The end of Jezebel is told in II Kings 9 : 30-37, where the story of her awful death is told. The end of the house of Ahab is told in II Kings 9 : 24-26 where Jehoram, the son, was killed and buried in the very vineyard of Naboth. It is a terrible record and shows what a dreadful thing sin is. The words of the Bible are true words. "Be sure your sin will find you out." "The wages of sin is death." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

THE CHARACTER OF AHAB

His Greatness. Ahab was a strong, and from the world's point of view, a successful ruler. "Few were greater, more successful, grander than he. He came to a distracted kingdom surrounded by enemies, and he left it in a state of considerable prosperity. He added city to city, country to country. He defeated again and again the great enemies who advanced against him. And in his national life he was magnificent. Here he built a temple, and there a lordly palace. His ivory palace was one of the wonders of the world. And so, according to the judgment of men, he was a great man, a wise king, a hero to be had in remembrance."

His Weakness. A man's real success is tested not by his palaces but by his moral character, and so judged, Ahab was a failure. For over twenty years God through his prophet spoke to him and yet he lived in open rebellion against God all that time. His marriage was a failure. His family was a failure. His life was a failure, and the judgment of Scripture is, "There was none like unto Ahab, who did sell himself to do that which was evil."

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

The important lesson to learn from the study of Ahab, Jezebel, and Elijah is that God is both righteous and merciful. He is a righteous God. He will in no wise clear the guilty. "Sorrow trackeeth wrong, as echo follows song, on, on, on." On the other hand, we are taught that God is merciful. God was considerate of Ahab when he turned his heart away from evil. God's message is always a message of mercy to those who are penitent. We must always remember that Jesus came not to destroy men's lives but to save them. He came to tell us that God will abundantly pardon. Learn these two verses so that you will never forget them:

"Was there ever kindest shepherd
Half so gentle, half so sweet
As the Saviour who would have us
Come and gather round his feet?
It is God; his love looks mighty,
But is mightier than it seems:
'Tis our Father; and his fondness
Goes far out beyond our dreams.

"There's a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in his justice,
Which is more than liberty.
There is welcome for the sinner,
And more graces for the good;
There is mercy with the Saviour,
There is healing in his blood."

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. Who was Ben-hadad? I Kings, ch. 20.
2. Was Ahab's request to Naboth wrong?
3. Why did Naboth refuse Ahab's offer?
4. What sins did Jezebel commit in her dealings with Naboth?
5. Why was Ahab punished for Jezebel's acts?
6. Why did Ahab call Elijah his enemy?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 7. What does the Bible teach about God's will for us?

A. The Bible teaches that it is God's will for us that we love him with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind; and that we love others as ourselves.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. Why did Ahab want Naboth's vineyard?
2. Why did Naboth object to parting with it?
3. What charges can you bring against Jezebel?
4. What truths about God did Elijah teach Ahab?
5. What punishment befell Ahab and Jezebel?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 58. What is required in the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment requireth the keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his Word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy Sabbath to himself.

Lesson VI—ELIJAH TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN

THE GOLDEN TEXT—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."—Rev. 2: 10.

TEXT OF LESSON, II Kings 2: 5-11

For entire lesson, see II Kings 2: 1-18

COMMON VERSION

5 And the sons of the prophets that *were* at Jer'i-cho came to E-li'sha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know *it;* hold ye your peace.

6 And E-li'jah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jor'dan. And he said, *As* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on.

7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jor'dan.

8 And E-li'jah took his mantle, and wrapped *it* together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

9 ¶ And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that E-li'jah said unto E-li'sha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And E-li'sha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless,* if thou see me *when I am* taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be *so.*

11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and E-li'jah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

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5 And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came near to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. 6 And Elijah said unto him, Tarry here, I pray thee; for Jehovah hath sent me to the Jordan. And he said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. 7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood over against them afar off: and they two stood by the Jordan. 8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. 9 And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. 10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless,* if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. 11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

The Time—About 852 B.C. **The Place**—The Jordan Valley.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, January 30	Elijah Taken to Heaven	II Kings 2: 1-11.
Tuesday, January 31	The Fruitless Search	II Kings 2: 12-18.
Wednesday, February 1	Enoch Taken to Heaven	Gen. 5: 21-24.
Thursday, February 2	Moses Taken to Heaven	Deut. 34: 1-8.
Friday, February 3	The Transfiguration	Mark 9: 2-8.
Saturday, February 4	Paul's Hope of Heaven	II Tim. 4: 1-8.
Sunday, February 5	Our Assurance of Heaven	I Thess. 4: 13-18.

DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES

5. The sons of the prophets. See also I Kings 20 : 35. Groups of young men organized and trained by the prophets to serve as their helpers and to be their successors.

7. Fifty men. These were witnesses of the dividing of the water both by Elijah and Elisha. This act confirmed Elisha as Elijah's successor. See v. 15.

9. A double portion. See Deut. 21 : 17. The first-born received twice as much as the other sons received. Elisha asks that he may be worthy to succeed Elijah.

11. A chariot of fire. See II Kings 6 : 17; Hab. 3 : 8; Ps. 68 : 17. God's greatness is spoken of in terms of earthly warfare. His is a heavenly army.

BETWEEN THE LESSONS

For several years after Elijah's appearance to Ahab in Naboth's vineyard, we hear nothing about Elijah. Why is this? We can understand it best by remembering that the Bible tells us only of the crises in Elijah's life, the times when he came into conflict with the king or with some great religious or political movement. Between these great events he is busy with quieter work. We hear more and more of "the schools of the prophets." These schools have been likened to theological seminaries where young men are trained for the ministry. We hear of these schools of the prophets in the time of Samuel, and doubtless Samuel, Elijah, and Elisha were all interested in training young men for the office of the prophet, and much of Elijah's time would be spent in this important work.

Ahab was succeeded by his son Ahaziah, who died after a short reign of two years. He met with an accident, having fallen from the upper chamber of his house. Instead of asking through Elijah whether or not he would recover, he sent a message to a heathen god, Baal-zebub at Ekron. The story of how Elijah met the messengers and sent them back to the king, should be read, in the first chapter of II Kings. Elijah said, "Is it because there is no God in Israel, that thou sendest to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from the bed whither thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." Elijah was still fighting idolatry and was still loyal to the Lord God of Israel. Read the entire story and see how God taught Ahaziah as he had taught Ahab, that he was still God almighty. He was still the God who answered by fire. This was Elijah's last recorded public service.

ELIJAH AND ELISHA

The story of Elisha's call is told in I Kings 19 : 19-21. This story should be carefully read. We are not told in so many words how close became the friendship of Elisha and Elijah, but it is easy to see that Elisha was like a son to the prophet. Among all the sons of the prophets, Elisha was the dearest, and he became to the aged prophet what Timothy later was to the Apostle Paul. Elijah must have spent much time in teaching Elisha and in pointing out the way in which he should go, and the one desire of Elisha's heart must have been that he might be worthy to carry on the work of his master. Elisha was very unlike Elijah. Elijah was a man of the desert, a hermit, belonging to the wild places around Jordan, while Elisha was a quiet man, accessible to all. God does not always choose the same type of men for his work. He used John the Baptist and John the apostle. He used Peter the impetuous and Paul the scholar. But in their common love for God, for truth, for righteousness, Elijah and Elisha were comrades.

ELIJAH'S FAREWELL

II Kings 2 : 5, 6

The time had come for Elijah to lay down his work. God was calling him home to heaven. He was an old man. His life had been hard, but he had been faithful, and God was about to give him a great reward. We are not told how it became known to Elisha and to the sons of the prophets, that Elijah's hour had come, but they knew perfectly well that Elijah was soon to leave them, and their hearts were sad. It is interesting to see Elijah saying farewell to his friends. "Elijah paid no farewell visits to the great and noble of Israel; but he could not leave the world without one more interview with the youths who were prosecuting their education at Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho; and that not simply because they were dear to him personally, as Timothy was to Paul, but because he recognized the momentous results to the nation at large of the work which lay before them in the coming years. They had in their hands much of the making of the character of the people for the next generation. And so, after having lovingly superintended their seminaries during the riper portion of his life, he went to say to them some memorable and impressive words, which would ever connect themselves in their minds with his translation to heaven."

This was Elijah's last work. If you knew that this were to be your last day on earth, how would you spend it? What would you do? What tasks would you like to finish? John Wesley was once asked that same question and he said he would go on doing what he intended to do, for all that he did was for the glory of God.

ELIJAH AT THE JORDAN

II Kings 2 : 7, 8

Elijah wished to be alone in his last hours, or else he wished to test Elisha, and so he went from Gilgal to Bethel and then to Jericho. He asked Elisha to remain behind, but each time Elisha re-

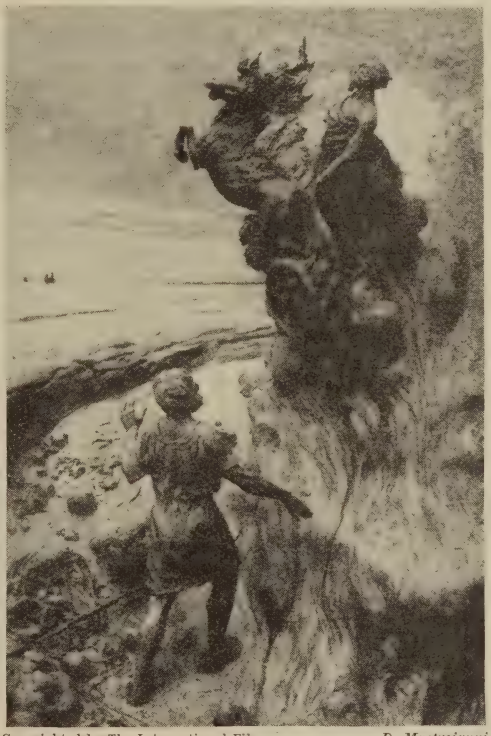
plied, "As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." So both Elijah and Elisha went on until they came to the river Jordan. Fifty men of the sons of the prophets had followed them, perhaps from the school at Jericho, to see what would happen, and these men took their places on a hill overlooking the valley, while the two prophets went down to the river. Taking off his mantle, Elijah wrapped it into a roll and smote the water, which divided so that the two men went through on dry land. As they went up the farther shore, they were lost to view among the hills. They were in the land where Moses had been buried by the hand of God. Perhaps the mysterious death and burial of Moses was in Elijah's mind. Of that death the poet wrote:

"And had he not high honor?
The hillside for his pall,
To lie in state while angels wait,
With stars for tapers tall;
And the dark rock pines, like tossing plumes,
Over his bier to wave;
And God's own hand, in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave."

ELISHA'S LAST REQUEST

II Kings 2 : 9, 10

Elijah knew that his end had come and, turning to Elisha, he said, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I am taken from thee." Elisha might have asked for wealth, or for power, or for miraculous gifts, but he expressed the deepest desire of the heart when he said, "I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me." That was a beautiful thing to say and Elijah must have been pleased. But Elisha had asked a difficult thing. It is difficult to transfer one's thought, one's ideal, one's spirit, to another. A father would like to give his spirit to his boy. A teacher would like to give his spirit to his pupil. God would like to give his spirit to his children. There is only one way this can be done, and that is if the son, the pupil, the child, is fit to receive it, and this was what Elijah meant when he said, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." If Elisha saw what happened to Elijah, then his prayer would be granted. Dr. William M. Taylor suggests that "the sight of Elijah's ascension gave to his servant a firmer and more vivid faith in the reality of the unseen life than he had ever had before. Had Elijah simply died like another man, no more lively sense of the invisible would have been given to Elisha than that which he had received at the deathbed of any other friend. But when he saw the prophet taken from his side alive, he felt as he had never felt before regarding the other state of existence. Wherever he had gone, the prophet was living, and if he had gone, as he was sure he had, to Jehovah, then a new emphasis was given to the words which used to be so often on his lips, 'Jehovah liveth,' and in that faith in Jehovah as the Living One lay the power of the spirit of Elijah."



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D. Mastroianni

ELIJAH TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN

THE ASCENSION OF ELIJAH

II Kings 2 : 11

Elisha did see Elijah leave him, and the spirit of God came upon him. They were going on up the hillside when suddenly, without warning, "Behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder." This was the separation of the two friends. The work of one was finished. The work of the other was just beginning. Following the swift appearance of the fiery chariot was a whirlwind, and Elijah was swept away and carried up into heaven. As he disappeared, Elisha cried after him, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" By this Elisha meant that Elijah had been worth more to Israel than all the

horses and chariots of all the armies of the king. His proclamation of faith, of righteousness, of God, had meant more than all the battles of Ahab. After the two short reigns of Ahab's sons, Ahaziah and Jehoram, Baal worship, against which Elijah fought, was forever destroyed.

It is interesting to compare the ascension of Elijah with that of Jesus. Bishop Trench makes this contrast: "The actual translation of Elijah is recorded in those words: 'And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.'' Compare with this the ascension of our blessed Lord: 'And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven.' The placing of one account side by side with the other is very instructive, and suggests many points of comparison."

THE SUCCESSOR OF ELIJAH

II Kings 2 : 12-18

Elijah was gone. Elisha stood alone upon the mountain side with God. He rent his clothes in two pieces in token of his grief, and taking up the mantle of Elijah which had fallen from the prophet, he returned to the Jordan. The sons of the prophets were still waiting on the other side, and when Elisha smote the waters of the Jordan and passed through on dry land, both he and they knew that upon Elisha rested the spirit of the great Elijah.

They were not satisfied with Elisha's story of Elijah's disappearance, however. Elijah had always come and gone like an apparition and they thought that perhaps in some way the Spirit of God had caught him away again, but after a three days' vain search which had been opposed by Elisha, they returned, confident that Elijah's end had been even as Elisha had said.

THE MESSAGE OF THE LESSON

The translation of Elijah is the second story in the Bible of a man who escaped death. "Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him." Elijah passed out of earth into heaven without seeing death. This of course is unusual and miraculous. We do not hope so to escape death. But like Elijah, we, too, may triumph over death through faith in Jesus. Paul said, "For to me . . . to die is gain."

The Christian view of death is nowhere better given than in the second part of Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," where Christiana, the wife of Christian, comes to die. Bunyan says: "Now the day drew on that Christiana must be gone. So the road was full of people to see her take her journey. But behold, all the banks beyond the river were full of horses and chariots, which were come down from above to accompany her to the city gate. So she came forth, and entered the river, with a beckon of farewell to those that followed her to the riverside. The last word she was heard to say was, 'I come, Lord, to be with thee and bless thee!' So her children and friends returned to their place, for that those that waited for Christiana had carried her out of their sight. So she went and called, and entered in at the gate with all the ceremonies of joy that her husband Christian had done before her. At her departure her children wept. But Mr. Great-heart and Mr. Valiant played upon the well-tuned cymbal and harp for joy."

"Jesus, thou Prince of life,
Thy chosen cannot die:
Like thee, they conquer in the strife,
To reign with thee on high."

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. Name the kings of Israel from Jeroboam to Jehoram.
2. What was Elisha's relation to Elijah?
3. Why did Elijah go to Gilgal, Bethel, and Jericho?
4. What was Elisha's last request to Elijah?
5. What condition did Elijah attach to his promise?
6. Where did Elijah go when he was carried off in the whirlwind?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 8. What is sin?

A. Sin is disobeying God or coming short of what he would have us be and do.

Q. 9. How does God look upon sin?

A. God looks upon sin with holy displeasure and great sorrow; and calls upon everyone to repent, warning us of the consequences of sin.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. What is meant by the "sons of the prophets"?
2. What do you know of Ahaziah and of his meeting with Elijah?
3. Why did Elisha refuse to let Elijah out of his sight?
4. Why did Elijah wish Elisha to tarry behind?
5. How did Elisha know that his last request was granted?
6. What does Elijah's ascension mean for us?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 59. Which day of the seven hath God appointed to be the weekly Sabbath?

A. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; and the first day of the week, ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath.

ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN

THE GOLDEN TEXT—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live."—John 5:25.

TEXT OF LESSON, II Kings 4:18-22, 27, 30, 32-35

For entire lesson, see II Kings 4:8-37

COMMON VERSION

18 ¶ And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

19 And he said unto him father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

20 And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and *then* died.

21 And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* upon him, and went out.

22 And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

* * * * *

27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Ge-ha'zi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul *is* vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid *it* from me, and hath not told me.

* * * * *

30 And the mother of the child said, *As* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

* * * * *

32 And when E-li'sha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, *and* laid upon his bed.

33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD.

34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

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18 And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. 19 And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to his servant, Carry him to his mother. 20 And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. 21 And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* upon him, and went out. 22 And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the servants, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

* * * * *

27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came near to thrust her away; but the man of God said, Let her alone: for her soul is vexed within her; and Jehovah hath hid it from me, and hath not told me.

* * * * *

30 And the mother of the child said, As Jehovah liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

* * * * *

32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. 33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto Jehovah. 34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon him; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. 35 Then he returned, and walked in the house once to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

The Time—About 850 B.C.

The Places—Shunem and Mount Carmel.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, February 6	The Woman's Hospitality	II Kings 4 : 8-13.
Tuesday, February 7	The Woman's Sorrow	II Kings 4 : 14-22.
Wednesday, February 8	The Woman's Faith	II Kings 4 : 25-30.
Thursday, February 9	The Woman's Reward	II Kings 4 : 31-37.
Friday, February 10	A Woman Restored	Acts 9 : 36-42.
Saturday, February 11	The Message to Martha	John 11 : 18-29.
Sunday, February 12	The Message to All	I Cor. 15 : 50-58.

DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES

35. He returned. Elisha did not give up his prayer or his effort. He continued to seek the answer to his prayer until it was granted.

BETWEEN THE LESSONS

Elisha has been called "the man of miracles." The spirit of God took possession of Elisha, and story after story of his wonderful power is told in these chapters in the Second Book of the Kings. The story of Elijah's disappearance in the whirlwind is told in the second chapter. You will remember that Elisha returned, smiting the waters with Elijah's mantle, thus proving to the sons of the prophets that he possessed the same power as had Elijah, his master. After a fruitless search for Elijah in the mountains, the sons of the prophets accepted Elisha as their master and as the man of God.

Elisha's first miracle after he came to Jericho was a miracle of mercy. He healed the impure water of the place and made it sweet. The second miracle was a miracle of terrible judgment upon irreverence. Bethel, where this act of judgment took place, was the seat of idolatry, and doubtless Elisha before this time had been subject to ridicule and persecution.

Elisha seems for a while to have made his home at Mount Carmel, but was called from his quiet abode to save the nation from defeat in time of war. Jehoram of Israel, Jehoshaphat of Judah, and the king of Edom were united against Moab and were about to be defeated when Elisha guided them to victory. The fourth miracle is recorded in the first verses of ch. 4. It is a beautiful story of how the widow's oil was increased until she could sell it to pay her debt. Elisha found her fearful and despondent, and left her happy and contented.

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ELISHA AND THE SHUNAMMITE

THE SHUNAMMITE

II Kings 4 : 8-17

As he traveled back and forth in the fulfillment of his duties, Elisha had enjoyed the charming hospitality of a wealthy woman of Shunem, a little village about three miles from Jezreel. She was a woman of influence and wealth, as well as of a devout and religious spirit. She soon became aware of the fact that Elisha was no ordinary man. Whenever he passed her house she gave him bread to eat, and one day she said to her husband, "Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God." She proposed therefore that an extra room be put on the house, "a little chamber with walls." See margin. It was to be a permanent part of the house, and not a mere temporary abiding place. This was done and in this "prophet's chamber" were put a bed, a table, a seat, and a candlestick. It was kept sacred for the man of God, and whenever he passed that way, he occupied it.

This was a beautiful and thoughtful thing to do. Many ministers of the gospel have enjoyed just such helpful service. It was therefore not to be wondered at that Elisha wished in some way to show his gratitude. Elisha knew the king and the nobility, and he offered to speak for her to the king and to the captain of the army. Elisha knew the day might come when she would be glad of protection. The time indeed did come when she needed help. See II Kings 8 : 1-6. The woman, however, had wealth and influence and, moreover, she did not wish a reward for being kind to Elisha. That would have been unworthy of her, so she said she needed nothing. She did not need the help of soldiers, for, she said, "I dwell among mine own people."

It was then that Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, suggested that a little child in the childless home of the good woman would bring her joy and happiness, and the presence of the little boy in this home forms the interesting story of the lesson.

THE SHUNAMMITE'S SORROW

II Kings 4 : 18-21

We are not told how old the little lad was when he fell sick. Years passed by. The lesson says

"the child was grown." He was old enough to run about, to follow his father out into the harvest field, and yet young enough to lie in his mother's arms. He had gone out in the morning to the reapers and there suddenly he had cried, "My head, my head." He had suffered a sunstroke which was common in that country. The story is very simple and very sad. We can picture the little lad who a few minutes before had been running in the field, now lying pale and speechless in the servant's arms as if dead. The father was helpless, and all he could say was, "Carry him to his mother." There might be help there. At least there would be comfort. The little boy sat on his mother's knee till noon, and then died. She carried the poor, little, lifeless body to Elisha's chamber and laid it on the prophet's bed and shut the door. Her sorrow found neither words nor tears. She was broken-hearted, yet she knew enough to seek God by seeking Elisha, the man of God.

THE VISIT TO ELISHA

II Kings 4 : 22-27

She did not complain and hide herself away in her grief. She knew what to do. The child had been the gift of God to her through Elisha's word, and to him she would tell her sorrow. So she told her husband that she wished to go to Elisha. He did not understand why she should go at such a time, for no religious festival was being observed. It was "neither new moon nor sabbath." She made no explanation, but bade the servant drive as fast as he could to the man of God at Mount Carmel. It is a very beautiful story and told with great simplicity and power. The distance from Shunem to Mount Carmel would be about fifteen to twenty miles. It was past noon when she started, and she wished to return again before dark. We are not told what she expected from Elisha, but her journey to him and her insistence upon his going with her, show that she was a woman of great faith and that she trusted in the living God. She teaches us that we, too, should go to God with our sorrow.

THE SENDING OF GEHAZI

II Kings 4 : 28-31

When she was still afar off, Elisha saw her and knew her, and said to Gehazi, his servant, "Behold, yonder is the Shunammite: run, I pray thee, now to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?" To these questions the woman answered, "It is well." Her faith knew that all was well, and at the same time she did not wish to talk about her sorrow with Gehazi. When she came to the prophet she threw herself at his feet, and clung to him. She said no word, and Gehazi would have thrust her away, but Elisha knew that her heart was broken and that she had come to him for help. "Let her alone: for her soul is vexed within her; and Jehovah hath hid it from me, and hath not told me." His words were the key to her sorrow, and she poured out her tale of grief in his ears. The prophet spoke to her no word of comfort, no word of hope, but bade Gehazi run with his master's staff and lay it on the face of the child. But the woman refused to depart unless Elisha went with her. She refused to leave him. She knew that God was with him. She did not know about the staff. So Elisha went and on their way Gehazi met them saying that the child was dead and the staff had had no effect. Failure lay in the lack of faith on the part of the woman or perhaps in the character of Gehazi himself or in Elisha's mistake in thinking that God could work through a piece of wood as well as through a consecrated life. Certain it is that God uses human hands and human hearts and not sticks and staffs to work his will.

THE MIRACLE OF LIFE

II Kings 4 : 32-35

When Elisha came to the room where the lad lay still in death, he went into the chamber and, shutting the door, prayed to God. God heard his prayer. Like Elijah, I Kings 17 : 21-23, "he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon him; and the flesh of the child waxed warm."

Elisha knew that God had heard his prayer, but still he prayed. He rose and "walked in the house once to and fro." He was not impatient, and God was teaching that home of sorrow to wait and trust. Again Elisha returned to the room, embracing the child in his arms. The first time he had, as it were, crouched or bowed over the little body. The second time he embraced it, and in his embrace the child's life returned. The lad sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. He awoke as if from sleep. Perhaps he had often played and perhaps slept in Elisha's room, for between them there must have been a great friendship, and we can imagine the happy smile on the little boy's face when he awoke and found himself with his friend. Death perhaps will be just like this. We shall open our eyes and see not only those we love, but see Jesus, our Best Friend.

THE MOTHER AND CHILD

II Kings 4 : 36, 37

When Elisha found that the lad's life had been given back to him, he called Gehazi and told him to call the mother, and when she came in he said, "Take up thy son." "Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground; and she took up her son, and went out." The curtain falls upon the scene and the mother and her child

are together again. Words cannot speak the happiness that filled the house. Elisha slipped away without a word, as if he had done nothing wonderful. It was not he who had wrought the cure, but God, and to God must be given all the praise and all the thanksgiving.

THE MEANING OF THE LESSON

God leads his children through sorrow into joy. To Jesus, Calvary came first and then the Easter morning. The last word is not death, but life. The words of the golden text contain the gospel answer to death—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live."

We are grateful that we live in the days of gospel light and in the faith of the immortal hope. "The story is told that a chamber in a certain dwelling was reputed to be haunted, and the family regarded it with terror. But one night the father determined to sleep in it himself, and coming forth the next morning all safe and sound, laughed away the fears of his children. So our Lord entered the grave, and dwelt among the dead; but in the morning he issued forth crying to his affrighted ones, 'All hail!' and the gloomy chamber is divested of its terror."

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. What miracles did Elisha perform before that mentioned in this lesson?
2. Where did Elisha make his home?
3. What caused the little lad's death?
4. Why did the woman go immediately to Elisha?
5. Why did Elisha send Gehazi with his staff?
6. Why was the life of the little lad given back?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 10. What are the consequences of sin?

A. The consequences of sin are estrangement from God, increasing sinfulness in ourselves, injury to others, and the righteous judgments of God in time and in eternity.

Q. 11. How has God provided for our salvation from sin?

A. God, of his great mercy, has provided for our salvation from sin by the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. What do you know about the Shunammite?
2. Why was she kind to Elisha?
3. What led her to seek Elisha in her sorrow?
4. Why did the staff of the prophet fail to work a miracle?
5. What is the most beautiful verse in the lesson?
6. What message has this lesson for us?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 60. How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?

A. The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.

Lesson VIII—ELISHA AND NAAMAN THE SYRIAN

THE GOLDEN TEXT—"Bless Jehovah, O my soul,
And forget not all his benefits:
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;
Who healeth all thy diseases."
—Ps. 103: 2, 3.

TEXT OF LESSON, II Kings 5: 1-4, 9-14

For entire lesson, see II Kings, ch. 5

COMMON VERSION

1 Now Na'a-man, captain of the host of the king of Syr'i-a, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syr'i-a: he was also a mighty man in valour, *but he was* a leper.

2 And the Syr'i-ans had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Is'ra-el a little maid; and she waited on Na'a-man's wife.

3 And she said unto her mistress, Would God

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1 Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him, Jehovah had given victory unto Syria: he was also a mighty man of valor, *but he was* a leper. 2 And the Syrians had gone out in bands, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maiden; and she waited on Naaman's wife. 3 And she said unto her mistress, Would that my lord were with the

my lord *were* with the prophet that *is* in Sa-ma'-ri-a! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

4 And *one* went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that *is* of the land of Is'ra-el.

* * * * *

9 So Na'a-man came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of E-li'sha.

10 And E-li'sha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jor'dan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean.

11 But Na'a-man was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

12 *Are* not Ab'a-na and Phar'par, rivers of Da-mas'cus, better than all the waters of Is'ra-el? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, *if* the prophet had bid thee *do some* great thing, wouldest thou not have done *it?* how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jor'dan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

prophet that is in Samaria! then would he recover him of his leprosy. 4 And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maiden that is of the land of Israel.

* * * * *

9 So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. 10 And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. 11 But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper. 12 Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. 13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? 14 Then went he down, and dipped *himself* seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

The Time—About 850 B.C. **The Place**—Samaria.

DAILY HOME READINGS

Date	Title	Reference
Monday, February 13	The Leprous Captain	II Kings 5 : 1-4.
Tuesday, February 14	The Captain's Journey	II Kings 5 : 5-9.
Wednesday, February 15	The Captain Healed	II Kings 5 : 10-14.
Thursday, February 16	The Captain's Gratitude	II Kings 5 : 15-19.
Friday, February 17	The Great Healer	Luke 4 : 16-27.
Saturday, February 18	The Healer at Work	Mark 1 : 39-45.
Sunday, February 19	Our Merciful God	Ps. 103 : 1-12.

DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES

1. The king of Syria. Ben-hadad. Syria lay to the north of Israel and had been saved from her enemy, possibly Assyria, by Naaman, whom God used. **A leper.** Leprosy was a slow disease. The laws concerning leprosy among the Jews, Lev., ch. 13, would not obtain in Syria.

2. Gone out in bands. These were raiding companies, acting like lawless bandits, for Syria and Israel were at peace.

12. Abanah and Pharpar. The Abanah rose on Anti-Lebanon, and the Pharpar on Mount Hermon. They are smaller and clearer than the Jordan. They lose themselves in the marsh lakes, east of Damascus.

13. My father. See II Kings 2 : 12; 6 : 21. A tit'le of honor, showing in what favor Naaman was held by his servants.

NAAMAN, THE SYRIAN

II Kings 5: 1

The story of Naaman is very attractive. He is a likeable man. The Jews had a tradition to the effect that it was Naaman who drew his bow at a venture and smote and killed Ahab. He had all the qualities of a great leader. He was brave and true. God had used him to give Syria the victory over the enemies of his country. He did not know Jehovah, yet God used him as his servant. The Bible says that he was "a great man with his master, and honorable." He enjoyed the favor and confidence of the king and was a popular hero, not only to the king and to the army, but to the humblest servant in his household.

Only one dark spot clouded his sunshine. After telling of his greatness, his charm, and his power, the verse says, "But he was a leper." That little

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HOSPITAL FOR LEPERS ON THE SITE OF THE HOUSE OF NAAMAN AT DAMASCUS

word "but" is like an unwelcome bond binding beauty and loveliness and power to weakness, disease, and death. We never know what silent sorrow belongs to homes which seem to be filled with happiness.

Leprosy is the most dreaded disease in the world. In the Bible it is a symbol of the deadliness of sin. Doctor Alexander Whyte, in speaking of it, says:

"Leprosy was feared and fled from in Israel as the stroke of God. Leprosy was the most fearful and the most hateful disease known to man. Leprosy was so loathsome, and so utterly incurable and deadly, that it was not looked on as an ordinary disease at all, but rather as a special creation in his anger, and a direct curse of God, both to punish sin, and, at the same time, to teach his people something of what an accursed thing sin really is; till the whole nature of leprosy and all the laws laid down for its treatment, and the miraculous nature of its so seldom cure, all combined to work into the imagination, and into the conscience, and into the heart, and into the ritual, and into the literature of Israel, some of her deepest lessons about the terrible nature and the only proper treatment of sin."

THE LITTLE CAPTIVE MAID

II Kings 5 : 2-4

The news of Naaman's disease would be whispered from room to room until the servants knew. The music would cease, the laughter would die out of the home, and the light in the eyes of Naaman's wife would be dimmed. There was no help, no cure. Wealth, power, favor, kings, and servants could not help. This was a sorrow that earth could not cure.

It happened that in Naaman's home was a little girl, a captive slave girl from Israel. Although Syria and Israel were at peace, yet raiding bands had gone over the border again and again, stealing both goods and people, and among these captives was this little, nameless maid.

We know nothing of her parents, and nothing of her age. She must have had personal charm, however, to have become a maid in waiting to Naaman's wife. The sorrow of her mistress and the trouble that had driven the light from the home of Naaman, the great man of the nation, appealed to her, and one day she said to Naamn's wife, "Would that my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! then would he recover him of his leprosy." Her story was soon told to Naaman, and he prepared to make the journey to Israel. When we are helpless, we turn to anything that promises help, and doubtless the fame of Elisha's power with God had traveled far and wide. It is a tribute to Naaman's character that he immediately set out on his quest for health.

THE JOURNEY TO ISRAEL

II Kings 5 : 5-8

Naaman set out on his journey well equipped. The king of Syria, Ben-hadad, gave him a letter to Jehoram, king of Israel, commending him to the mercy of Israel's king. He took with him wealth both in gold and in silver and also in rare and costly garments. If wealth could purchase healing, then he could not fail!

When the king of Israel heard the mission of Naaman, he was terrified. It was an impossible message. Leprosy was incurable, and the only meaning of the message was that, since failure must face any attempt of the king of Israel to cure Naaman, war would be the result. Jehoram, the king, rent his clothes and said, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? but consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me." Elisha, who was on intimate terms with the royal court, heard of what had happened at the palace and sent word to the king, saying,

"Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel."

NAAMAN AND ELISHA

II Kings 5 : 9, 10

When Naaman and his retinue of servants came to the house of Elisha, they waited for the prophet to appear. Naaman was the king's representative. He was a man of wealth and of position. He expected homage from the prophet. Elisha, however, instead of coming out to pay his respects to the great captain, sent his servant, who said, as if giving a command to one of lower rank, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." It was humbling to this great man. He had nothing he could give. If he wanted healing, he must obey and receive the gift as the poorest and the humblest man would have to receive it.

It is this way that salvation comes to us. We cannot buy it, or order it. It is the gift of God. The message is, "The free gift of God is eternal life." Money can buy much, but not the best things. It cannot buy health, nor happiness, nor heaven.

" 'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
'Tis only God may be had for the asking."

THE ANGER OF NAAMAN

II Kings 5 : 11, 12

Naaman was angry. He turned away from the house of the prophet in a rage. He was offended, insulted, angry. The prophet had treated him shamefully, he thought. "I thought," he said, "He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper." He knew enough about magic to believe in it. The wonders of the magician could be bought and sold. But the prophet of God would not even see him in his high pride of position. The remedy proposed was ridiculous. Why had he taken such a journey merely to bathe in the Jordan? "Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean?" "This was the reward of his toil and his humiliation; his sickly, suffering, shattered frame had been dragged through roadless wastes in hope of cure; his haughty spirit had abased itself to ask a favor of the conquered king of Israel and to come a suppliant to this mean place; and now, his sufferings unpitied, his pomp unnoticed, his gold despised, he is turned away like a beggar from the door, with the added insult of a foolish, trivial message. He gazed on the yellow, mud-stained stream which rolled beneath his feet at the bottom of its deep ravine; he thought of silver Abanah and Pharpar, winding through the myrtle and apricot groves of his native home to their far-off inland sea; and, sick with disappointment and anger, he turned to begin his weary, hopeless journey back."

THE ADVICE OF THE SERVANTS

II Kings 5 : 13

It is a mark of fine appreciation that the servants of the great man were eager to serve their master. They even opposed his will that they might bring to him some benefit. How wise and tactful they were! Naaman's anger would do no good. They came near to the great man in his rage and said quietly, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"

It was wise advice. The captain must surrender to the prophet. The will of man must surrender to the will of God. It is only in this way that God's best gifts come to us. We must "stoop down and drink, and live." In speaking of the entrance through the strait gate into the life eternal, John Bunyan says, "Forasmuch as the passage was wonderful narrow, even so narrow that I could not but with great difficulty enter in thereat, it showed me that none could enter into life, but those that were in downright earnest, and unless also they left this wicked world behind them; for here was only room for body and soul, but not for body and soul and sin."

We can receive the best gifts of God only by receiving them from his hands. He dwells only in the humble and contrite heart. Our cry must be,

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

"Here, Lord, I give myself away,
'Tis all that I can do."

LIKE A LITTLE CHILD

II Kings 5 : 14

The story of Naaman's obedience is very attractive. He did not argue further. He ceased to rebel. He surrendered. He obeyed. He did what the prophet bade him. He washed in the Jordan seven times, and then "his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." The decayed, diseased flesh disappeared, and in its place, the beauty of health appeared. It was a great trial of faith. We can picture him after his first plunge, looking again at the spot of the leper still unchanged. After the fifth and sixth attempts, he would be tempted to turn away, for the healing was not gradual but sudden, and after the seventh time, behold, he was whole again. It was not until he had obeyed the prophet's command fully that the blessing came.

The story of Naaman's great gratitude and of Gehazi's treachery are told in the remaining verses of the chapter and should be read. God's gifts cannot be paid for by anything less than gratitude and surrender of the heart to him.

LESSONS FROM THE LESSON

Let us learn from the lesson that God may use a little nameless boy or girl to do some great service. The name of the architect of the beautiful cathedral of Chartres is not known. It is not remembered, but everyone enjoys his work. Let us do our duty and leave results to God.

Let us learn that we receive from God the best of all gifts—Jesus. He is God's Gift to us. We cannot buy him. We must receive him by giving ourselves to him.

Let us learn that both joy and sorrow make up life. Naaman was a great man and honorable, but he was a leper. We never know what sorrow lies behind wealth and power and position. God means us to be humble.

Let us learn that God's best blessings come often in doing commonplace things. Naaman wanted to be told to do something great. John Eliot, the missionary, was found, on the day of his death, in his eighty-sixth year, teaching the Indian alphabet to a child. When asked why he did it, he replied: "I prayed God to make me useful in my sphere, and he heard my prayer, and now that I am no longer young, he leaves me strength enough to teach this little Indian child his alphabet."

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. What was Naaman's position?
2. What qualities in Naaman do you like?
3. What qualities in Naaman do you dislike?
4. Why do you admire the little captive maid?
5. Why was Naaman reluctant to take the advice of Elisha?
6. What does Naaman's cure mean for us?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 12. Who is Jesus Christ?

A. Jesus Christ is God's eternal and only-begotten Son who humbled himself to become man, and so is God and man.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. Why is leprosy like sin?
2. What do you know about the little captive maid?
3. Why was Naaman so willing to go to Israel?
4. Why did Elisha refuse to see Naaman?
5. What made Naaman so angry?
6. What is this lesson's missionary message?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 61. What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment forbiddeth the omission, or careless performance, of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations.

Lesson IX—ELISHA'S HEAVENLY DEFENDERS

THE GOLDEN TEXT—"The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him, And delivereth them."
—Ps. 34:7.

TEXT OF LESSON, II Kings 6:8-17

For entire lesson, see II Kings 6: 8-23

COMMON VERSION

8 ¶ Then the king of Syr'i-a warred against Is'ra-el, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place *shall be* my camp.

9 And the man of God sent unto the king of Is'ra-el, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syr'i-ans are come down.

10 And the king of Is'ra-el sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syr'i-a was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us *is* for the king of Is'ra-el?

12 And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but E-li'sha, the prophet that *is* in Is'ra-el, telleth the king of Is'ra-el the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

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8 Now the king of Syria was warring against Israel; and he took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. 9 And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are coming down. 10 And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of; and he saved himself there, not once nor twice. 11 And the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel? 12 And one of his servants said, Nay, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

13 ¶ And he said, Go and spy where he *is*, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, *he is* in Do'than.

14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them.

17 And E-li'sha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire round about E-li'sha.

13 And he said, Go and see where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan.

14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. 15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, a host with horses and chariots was round about the city. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? 16 And he answered, Fear not; for they that are with us are more than they that are with them. 17 And Elisha prayed, and said, Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

The Time—About 848 B.C. **The Place**—Dothan.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, February 20	Elisha's Heavenly Defenders	II Kings 6 : 8-17.
Tuesday, February 21	Daniel's Heavenly Defenders	Dan. 6 : 16-23.
Wednesday, February 22	Hezekiah's Heavenly Defenders	II Chron. 32 : 6-8, 21, 22.
Thursday, February 23	The Hebrew Children's Heavenly Defender	Dan. 3 : 19-25.
Friday, February 24	Peter's Heavenly Defender	Acts 12 : 5-11.
Saturday, February 25	Paul's Heavenly Defender	II Tim. 4 : 14-18.
Sunday, February 26	Our Heavenly Defender	Ps. 34 : 1-8.

DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES

8. The king of Syria. Probably Ben-hadad. See v. 24 and I Kings 20 : 1. There were frequent wars between Syria and Israel.

11. Which of us. The king thought that there was a traitor in his own camp who had betrayed him to the enemy.

13. Dothan. About ten miles north of Samaria. It was located on the highway between Damascus and Egypt. It commanded the pass which crossed the ridge of Carmel.

17. Horses and chariots. God's servants are always safe, not always from bodily and earthly harm, but always from spiritual harm. See Ps. 34 : 7; 91 : 4.

THE KING OF SYRIA

II Kings 6: 8-10

The king of Syria, probably Ben-hadad, had planned a series of invasions of Israel. There does not seem to have been an open declaration of war. The war was carried on in an irregular manner. A band of soldiers would agree to concentrate upon a certain place and there make captive the people and plunder the country. Each time one of these invasions was planned, the king of Syria found himself face to face with a superior force of Israel, so that he had to withdraw without even giving battle. The story says that this happened not "once nor twice," which of course means that it was repeated again and again.

Let us note the friendly relations between Elisha, the prophet, and the king. Elisha warned the king of every attempt at invasion and the king promptly acted upon the prophet's advice. The king was probably Jehoram, who had done away with much of the idolatry practiced by Ahab. The work of Elijah had so far been successful that Elisha was able to live a happier and quieter life than his predecessor. "Unless winter storms come first, spring sunshine will draw forth few flowers." Elijah was like the storm—Elisha like the springtime.

THE KING'S HELPER

II Kings 6 : 11, 12

The king of Syria was greatly troubled and perplexed. He knew that every time he tried to invade Israel, and agreed upon the place of attack, the army of Israel was always there to checkmate him. Something was wrong. His plans were known, and the only explanation he could arrive at was that a spy was at work in his own camp and told the plans to Israel. "Will ye not show me," he said to his officers, "which of us is for the king of Israel?" He was sure that there was treachery in the army. That was the only possible explanation. But the officers and servants of the king knew better. They knew that the

knowledge which led to the defeat of Syria was not obtained from Syria, but from the prophet Elisha. They said, "Nay, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." It was a remarkable answer. These servants knew of Elisha's fame. They had heard of him. There may have been some who knew the story of Naaman. They were right. Elisha was worth more than chariots and horses to Israel, for God was with him.

This was Elisha's great service to his nation. He brought no stirring message, as Elijah did. He fought not so terribly against the evils of his age, but he counseled with authority. He commanded obedience because God was with him. He was a prophet, not only to the souls of men, but also to the nation. He was a man like John Knox and Martin Luther and Savonarola, who guided kings on their thrones and who made history. It is a national safeguard when men of God see clearly and speak plainly to their age.

CAPTURING THE PROPHET

II Kings 6 : 13-15

When the king of Israel understood the situation, his plan was quickly formed. He would capture Elisha and take him out of Israel and so remove him from power. That seemed an easy thing to do. First of all he found out where Elisha had his dwelling place. This was discovered to be at Dothan, about ten miles from Samaria.

The king immediately sent forward a large army to encompass Dothan and capture Elisha. The venture was quickly perfected and in the night, the mighty force of men, horses, and chariots went forth and, when the sun rose, behold the city was invaded and there was no chance of escape. The servant of the prophet, a young man, who had taken the place of Gehazi, was terrified when, early in the morning, he found that they were prisoners within the city. He was terror-stricken and returned to his master saying, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" It is a tribute to Elisha that such a host was sent to capture him. He had inspired terror in the hearts of the enemy. It seems strange that the king of Syria should not have thought that if the prophet knew about his former movements against Israel, he would not also know about this movement against himself. But worldly wisdom is always blind to the deepest truths.

THE INVISIBLE ARMY

II Kings 6 : 16, 17

The servant of Elisha was terrified and afraid For him the end had come. Fear smote his heart. It was otherwise with Elisha. He seemed not even surprised. He was a prisoner, and yet he was free. He, too, saw the army of Syria, but between that army and the city, he saw a still greater army. Turning to the lad he said, "Fear not; for they that are with us are more than they that are with them." And lifting his heart to God he prayed, "Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see." And immediately "Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." The Syrian army was still there, but between that army and Israel was the invisible army of God. It is always so. Over in France during the days of the Great War, the soldiers liked to read the Ninety-first Psalm. Do you know it? Every boy and girl should learn it by heart. These are some of its fine verses.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High
Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.
. . . . . .
He shall call upon me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble:
I will deliver him, and honor him."

The words of the golden text proclaim the same great message:

"The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him,
And delivereth them."

Let us ask God to give us the eyes of faith to see the invisible world. Although it is not always true that God saves us from earthly and bodily harm, he always is willing to shield us from spiritual harm, and this is the only real harm. Call to mind the wonderful words of Paul: "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

THE CAPTURED ARMY

II Kings 6 : 18-23

(The lesson text ends with v. 17 but the verses discussed here give the conclusion of the story.)

Instead of capturing Elisha, the Syrian army was itself captured. Elisha, through the power of God, led them into captivity and then set them free. God struck them with blindness and they were led to Samaria, the capital, where they were surrounded by the forces of Israel. Instead of permitting the king to destroy them, Elisha commanded that they be fed and treated kindly, and afterwards sent home. This was Elisha's way of treating evil. This was his way of stopping war, for "the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." Elisha reminds us of the words of Jesus. His method was the method of

the gospel. He showed us the true way to conquer. He gave us a way to put an end to war forever. His kindness killed all hatred in the hearts of his enemies. It is the gospel recipe. "But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head."

EYES THAT SEE

John Ruskin has said that for a hundred that can read, only ten can think, and for ten that can think, only one can see. Faith in God gives us the power to see clearly what is hidden to others. God is always near, though we see him not. Did you ever see a puzzle picture? It is a picture which, when you first look at it, seems to be perfectly clear. It has a question, however, which says, "This is a camp; find the soldier." And you look and look, and at last, after you have turned it around and around, suddenly you see the soldier, and you wonder why you did not see him before, for he is now all that you really see. So it is with life. God seems to hide himself away. But when we need him most, we find that he has always been near. In one of his sermons, Phillips Brooks says: "This is what Jesus did. He did not bring God into the world. God forbid that we should think that! God had never been out of the world he made and loved. He touched the world with his life and made it everywhere a luminous utterance of God. And then, what else? He opened the blind eyes of every man who would become his servant, and bade him see. He regenerated man. He brought him back, that is, into the first condition, lost so long, in which his eyes were open and he could see the God who was everywhere. 'As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' He redeemed man. He brought him back into the Eden of the perfect reconciliation. Once more he might see God. No longer with the eyes of sense but all the more clearly to the inner vision of the renewed, obedient soul, the Lord God walked with man among the trees of the garden of the Christian life."

WHAT THE LESSON MEANS

God is always near. We are blind to the greatest realities of life if we do not see God. The spiritual world is the real world. "The eternal God is thy dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Doctor Robert E. Speer once told a beautiful story about his little boy: "I was awakened the other morning about four o'clock in my room by a little voice just beside my bed in the dark asking for a drink. I got the little lad a drink, and he lay quiet for a moment, and then asked, 'Father, may I sing myself asleep?' And I said, 'Yes, dear, go ahead.' But soon he got up so much enthusiasm that I told him he would better stop, or none of the rest of us could sleep. Then he was quiet awhile, but soon I heard his little voice again in the perfect stillness of the night, 'Father, have you got your face turned toward me?' And I said, 'Yes, little boy,' and the darkness was as the light of day to him." So God guards us though we see him not.

A PRAYER OF FAITH

" 'Tis by the faith of joys to come
We walk through deserts dark as night:
Till we arrive at heaven, our home,
Faith is our guide, and faith our light.
. . . . . .

"Cheerful we tread the desert through,
While faith inspires a heavenly ray;
Though lions roar and tempests blow,
And rocks and dangers fill the way.

"So Abram, by divine command,
Left his own house to walk with God;
His faith beheld the Promised Land,
And fired his zeal along the road."

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. Why did the king of Syria fail in his war with Israel?
2. What was Elisha's relation to the king of Israel?
3. How did the Syrians know about Elisha?
4. How did the Syrian king propose to conquer Israel?
5. Why was Elisha unafraid when his servant was afraid?
6. How did Elisha treat his enemies?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 13. How did Jesus Christ become man?

A. Jesus Christ became man by being born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem of Judea, as it had been foretold; and his name was called Jesus, which means Saviour, because he was to save his people from their sins.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. Locate Syria, Dothan, Samaria on the map.
2. Why did Elisha inform Israel's king against the Syrians?
3. How did the king of Syria attempt to end Elisha's influence?
4. Why was not Elisha filled with terror?
5. How did Elisha give courage to his servant?
6. What message does the lesson teach?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 62. What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment?

A. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment are, God's allowing us six days of the week for our own employments, his challenging a special propriety in the seventh, his own example, and his blessing the Sabbath-day.

JEHOVAH'S MERCY TO A HEATHEN CITY

THE GOLDEN TEXT—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."—Isa. 55: 7.

TEXT OF LESSON, Jonah, ch. 3

For entire lesson, see Jonah, chs. 3, 4

COMMON VERSION

1 And the word of the LORD came unto Jo'nah the second time, saying,

2 Arise, go unto Nin'e-veh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

3 So Jo'nah arose, and went unto Nin'e-veh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nin'e-veh was an exceeding great city of three days' journey.

4 And Jo'nah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nin'e-veh shall be overthrown.

5 ¶ So the people of Nin'e-veh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

6 For word came unto the king of Nin'e-veh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered *him* with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused *it* to be proclaimed and published through Nin'e-veh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that *is* in their hands.

9 Who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

10 ¶ And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did *it* not.

AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE

1 And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time, saying, 2 Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. 3 So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of Jehovah. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey. 4 And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

5 And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6 And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water; 8 but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? 10 And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

DAILY HOME READINGS

DATE	TITLE	REFERENCE
Monday, February 27	Resisting God's Call	Jonah 1 : 1-10.
Tuesday, February 28	Facing the Issue	Jonah 2 : 1-9.
Wednesday, March 1	Jehovah's Mercy to Nineveh	Jonah, ch. 3.
Thursday, March 2	A Greater Than Jonah	Matt. 12 : 38-45.
Friday, March 3	Praise to the King	Psalm 96.
Saturday, March 4	Jehovah's Mercy to All	Ps. 145 : 8-19.
Sunday, March 5	The Gracious Call	Isa. 55 : 1-9.

DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES

2. Unto Nineveh. Famous as the capital of Assyria, the enemy of Israel.

3. Three days' journey. It required a journey of three days to go around the city. It was a city thronged with people.

4. Yet forty days. God gave Nineveh a chance to repent and turn to him. God is merciful as well as righteous.

7. Man nor beast. Even the cattle were compelled to join in the mourning. Read Joel 1 : 20. The Persians often cut the hair of the horses in order to show that they, too, shared in mourning.

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TRADITIONAL TOMB OF JONAH AT NINEVEH

10. Repented. The word means "to change one's mind," or one's purpose. God's purpose, however, depended upon the attitude of the people of Nineveh.

THE PROPHET JONAH

We have studied concerning Elijah and Elisha, the great prophets of Israel. We study this week about a more obscure prophet of Israel, whose message was, however, one of the most wonderful ever given to a prophet of the Old Testament. If Elijah was the prophet of justice and righteousness, Jonah was the prophet of love and mercy and forgiveness. Jonah was a Jew, and thought that Jehovah cared for none but Jews, and when God commanded him to go and preach repentance to the people of Nineveh, he fled from the presence of the Lord. He wished to see Nineveh perish. He did not wish Nineveh to be saved. But God taught him that he cared for all people—not Jews alone, but people of all races and languages. When we understand the message of Jonah, we will see that he was the first great foreign missionary. He was sent with a message of mercy to a foreign and alien people. There is no prophet in the Old Testament except Jonah who teaches us the message of Bishop Faber's wonderful hymn:

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal,
Is most wonderfully kind."

JONAH'S CALL TO DUTY

Jonah 1 : 1, 2, 10

The book of Jonah is a story. It is one complete story. It should therefore be read from the first verse to the last. Read it through from beginning to end without stopping, and you will wonder why you never discovered this wonderful story before. When the story begins, God had spoken to Jonah, commanding him to go and preach to Nineveh. Nineveh was a very great and wicked city. It was the world-famous capital of Assyria. Its wickedness would soon destroy it. Jonah, being a Jew, was willing to see it destroyed, but God, who loves everyone, loved the people of Nineveh. When Jonah thought that his preaching might lead Nineveh to repentance, he fled from the very presence of God. He foolishly thought that if he took a ship out into the deep, God would not be there. But we cannot fly from God. Read Ps. 139 : 7-12. Verses 9, 10 are quoted below:

"If I take the wings of the morning,
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;
Even there shall thy hand lead me,
And thy right hand shall hold me."

God is in our hearts, and to try to fly from God is like trying to run away from ourselves. So, out in the great deep, God found Jonah. The story of his troubles with the sailors and his awful punishment is told in chs. 1, 2. His experience in the sea and in the great fish brought him to his senses. He himself said that he had been in "hell." If you will look at the second chapter in the Revised Version, you will see that Jonah's words are in poetry. He speaks of his recovery as his salvation, "Yet hast thou brought up my life from the pit, O Jehovah." He was now ready to do what God wanted him to do. When we try to run from God's will, we only bring trouble and sorrow upon ourselves. At this point, when Jonah was ready to do what God wanted, our lesson begins.

JONAH'S SECOND CHANCE

Jonah 3 : 1, 2

God gave Jonah a second chance. He was patient with him and led him to understand the true character of God. Back in the days of Jeroboam II,

II Kings 14 : 25, Jonah had prophesied against Syria, and his prophecy had been fulfilled, and he preferred that Nineveh, too, should not be saved but destroyed. He was a Jewish patriot. But true religion deepens and widens true patriotism, and makes the world a brotherhood. Jonah had himself experienced sorrow and danger. He himself, had been nigh unto death and in this way God taught him to have mercy upon others who, too, face sorrow and death.

Let us try to learn that God is more merciful than any of us can ever be. He does not wish the death of any sinner but he wants all to come unto him and live. It is sin alone that keeps God from befriending all men, but while they prefer sin to God, it is not possible for God to save them. God loves us, however, even in our sin, and tries to save us. A little boy once told his mother that if he could ask God for the thing he most wanted, he would ask him to love him when he was naughty. God indeed loves us when we are naughty and this is the message of the book of Jonah as it is the message of the gospel of Jesus. And in his love, we learn to hate sin.

THE MESSAGE OF JONAH

Jonah 3 : 3, 4

The great city of Nineveh was thronged with thoughtless people. It was so large that it took a journey of three days to go around it. Entering the city a day's journey, Jonah began to deliver his message to that thoughtless, worldly city. His message was that God would destroy Nineveh unless the people turned to God and changed their ways. Jonah was a strange-looking man from a far-away, strange country. He went crying through the streets, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." People must have looked at him in wonder. He told them of the true God and how all children of men were his, and how he cared for all and loved all and wanted all to come unto him and find life and salvation. It is a wonderful message. It makes hatred impossible. It proclaims the message of the gospel that God is our Father and that we are all his children and that he patiently watches and waits for our home-coming. Nineveh was just God's prodigal city returning again to the love and care of the eternal God. It is a message like John 3 : 16, 17: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him."

THE REPENTANCE OF NINEVEH

Jonah 3 : 5-10

In his heart Jonah did not wish to see Nineveh saved. He wanted the enemies of his people to be destroyed. That was an awful thing for him to desire, but we can understand Jonah's feeling if we will put ourselves in his place. But Jonah was disappointed. The people of Nineveh, from the king down to the humblest little child, turned to God. They changed their minds about sin and about God, and turned away from their wickedness and asked God to forgive and bless them. They put on sackcloth as a sign of deep mourning. They proclaimed a fast, and neither man nor beast ate or drank while they prayed to God for mercy. It was a wonderful sight, a whole city waiting upon God. And God heard and answered and forgave them and saved both them and their city, "that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle."

Let us learn from this lesson that repentence always brings forgiveness. The one way to destroy the power of sin is to confess it. When we repent, we separate ourselves from our sin; we say it does not belong to us and we become again as if we had not sinned. It is God's love, his mercy that leads us to penitence. The love of God led the great city of Nineveh to trust him and to turn to him for peace and security.

THE CONVERSION OF JONAH

Jonah 4 : 1-11

(Chapter 4 is not printed, but it is part of the entire lesson reference.)

Jonah was displeased when he discovered that Nineveh was not to be destroyed. He half repented that he had ever gone to Nineveh to preach repentance. In his anger he prayed to God, saying, "Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness, and repentest thee of the evil." He was displeased and angry, and wished to die. God treated him like a fretful child and permitted him for a while to indulge his childishness. Under the shade of a gourd, a fast-growing plant with broad leaves, Jonah rested. The gourd shaded him from the sun, but the next day a worm attacked the gourd and it withered, and Jonah was left to the mercy of the hot sun and the east wind. He was still fretful and angry. The worm had destroyed the gourd, and Jonah was angry and bitter. He was angry with himself and angry with God and angry because of the gourd that had failed him. Then God spoke to him, "Thou hast had regard for the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

In this way God taught Jonah, and he teaches us, that God is kinder than man. If Jonah had pity for the gourd, should not God have pity on little children and on helpless, innocent cattle? As

we hear these wonderful words from God, we think of the words of Jesus. "How much then is a man of more value than a sheep!" "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they?" "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"

THE MESSAGE OF THE BOOK

A recent writer upon the prophets of Israel says: "I have read the book of Jonah at least a hundred times, and I will publicly avow, for I am not ashamed of my weakness, that I cannot even now take up this marvelous book, nay, nor even speak of it, without tears rising to my eyes, or my heart beating higher. This apparently trivial book is one of the deepest and grandest that was ever written, and I should like to say to everyone who approaches it, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.'"

What, then, are the wonderful lessons of this great missionary book? These are the lessons:

(1) All men are brothers. We are created to love and not to hate one another. The first commandment is to love God. The second commandment is to love one another.

(2) God is Love. He will abundantly pardon. He cares for all. He may punish, but he loves to help all who come to him.

(3) God is better than our best thought of him. The world with its teeming millions is in his keeping. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life."

AN ILLUSTRATION

God's love for Nineveh and his trust in the people of Nineveh led to repentance and salvation.

The story is told of Lincoln that when he reprieved William Scott, condemned to be shot for sleeping at his post, he said to him: 'I am going to trust you, and send you back to your regiment. My bill for this is a very large one. I have left my work, and have come up here from Washington on your account. There is only one man in all the world who can pay the bill, and his name is William Scott. If from this day William Scott does his duty, so that, if I were there when he comes to die, he could look me in the face as he does now, and say, "I have kept my promise, and have done my duty as a soldier," then the debt will be paid. Will you make that promise, and try to keep it?' The promise was made and kept. The soldier lived a life of courageous helpfulness, and died while rescuing wounded men.

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. Who was Jonah?
2. What message came to Jonah from God?
3. Why did Jonah try to run away from God?
4. What message did he proclaim to Nineveh?
5. Why was Jonah disappointed when Nineveh repented,
6. What mistake did Jonah make about God?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 14. How did Jesus Christ live on earth?

A. Jesus Christ lived on earth a truly human life, with its joys and sorrows, being tempted as we are yet without sin, always doing the will of God, and so setting us a perfect example.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. Why did Jonah refuse to deliver God's message to Nineveh?
2. How was Jonah taught that it is best to do God's will?
3. What was Jonah's message to Nineveh?
4. What led Nineveh to repent of its wickedness?
5. Why was Jonah displeased with God's kindness to Nineveh?
6. What missionary message is contained in the lesson?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 63. Which is the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment is, *Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*

Lesson XI—AMOS WARNS ISRAEL

THE GOLDEN TEXT—"Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler;
And whosoever erreth thereby is not wise."
—Prov. 20: 1.

TEXT OF LESSON, Amos 6: 1-8

COMMON VERSION

1 Woe to them *that are* at ease in Zi'on, and trust in the mountain of Sa-mar'i-a, *which are* named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Is'ra-el came!

AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE

1 Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and to them that are secure in the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel come! 2 Pass ye unto

2 Pass ye unto Cal'neh, and see; and from thence go ye to Ha'math the great: then go down to Gath of the Phil'is-tines: *be they* better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border?

3 Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near;

4 That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall;

5 That chant to the sound of the viol, *and* invent to themselves instruments of musick, like Da'vid;

6 That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Jo'seph.

7 ¶ Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

8 The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Ja'cob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great; then go down to Gath of the Philistines: are they better than these kingdoms? or is their border greater than your border? 3—ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; 4 that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; 5 that sing idle songs to the sound of the viol; that invent for themselves instruments of music, like David; 6 that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief oils; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.

7 Therefore shall they now go captive with the first that go captive; and the revelry of them that stretched themselves shall pass away. 8 The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by himself, saith Jehovah, the God of hosts: I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces; therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein.

DAILY HOME READINGS

Date	Title	Reference
Monday, March 6	Amos Warns Israel	Amos 6 : 1-8.
Tuesday, March 7	Tempting God's Leaders	Amos 2 : 10-16.
Wednesday, March 8	Be Generous and Just	Amos 5 : 10-15.
Thursday, March 9	Insincere Worship	Amos 5 : 21-27.
Friday, March 10	Danger of Evil Companions	Prov. 1 : 7-19.
Saturday, March 11	Children of Light	Eph. 5 : 1-14.
Sunday, March 12	A Citizen of Zion	Psalm 15.

DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES

1, 2. Woe to them. These two verses are very difficult to translate. They have been translated thus: "Woe to the easy-going in Zion and to the secure in the mountains of Samaria! Make the round of the foremost nations and come to them, O house of Israel. Pass over to Calneh and see, and from thence go to Hamath Rabbah: then go down to Gath of the Philistines. Are you better than these kingdoms? Or is your border greater than their border that you should be so favored?" **Calneh, Hamath, Gath.** Calneh a town not identified. Hamath, a city at this time subject to Israel. Gath, one of the five great cities of the Philistines.

4. Stretch themselves. The Jews sat at meals. See I Sam. 20 : 24. The foreign fashion was to recline at meals. This custom is first mentioned here. These nobles lived lazy and luxurious lives.

6. Wine in bowls. Bowls were of costly material and were generally used in divine service. See Zech. 9 : 15. The idleness of the nobles was matched by their extravagance.

8. Excellency. The things of which the nation was proud. Her history, her Temple, her laws, all belonged to the things that were excellent.

THE PROPHET AMOS

The lesson last week introduced us to Jonah, a true prophet of Israel. This week we are to study about the prophet Amos, who also was a prophet sent to the Northern Kingdom. He began life as David did, as a shepherd. He was born in Judah, but we do not know his parents' names. He possessed a few sycomore trees, and a small flock of sheep, ugly and short-footed, but very valuable because of the fine wool they produced. He was an obscure person living an obscure but contented life during the period when Jeroboam II was king of Israel and Uzziah was king of Judah which was about 775-750 B.C.

The kingdom of Israel had been very prosperous. Jeroboam, the king, had won many victories and, as wealth increased, luxury and intemperance and extravagance increased. Read vs. 4-6 of our lesson. The poor were burdened with taxes and were unable to secure justice. They were not slaves, but they were treated as such. Read ch. 8 : 4-6. God had warned the people by means of locusts and pestilence and famine, but they were utterly careless in their selfish luxury and impure social life. Amos, who belonged really to Judah, knew

all this, and his soul burned within him against the sins of the people.

THE CALL OF THE PROPHET

When God has a work to do, he finds some one prepared for that work. The prophets and the priests of Israel were silent, but Amos knew God, and when God called, he answered. God called Moses and Isaiah and Jeremiah and Elijah and Elisha and Jonah, and Amos knew that God had called him. In ch. 7 : 14, 15, we read, "Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycomore-trees: and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel." God had called him and he could not refuse. He said: "The lion hath roared; who will not fear? The Lord Jehovah hath spoken; who can but prophesy?" His heart was on fire for righteousness and justice. His prophecy has been called "A Cry for Justice." He condemned the nobles, the judges, the priests, the wealthy, the leaders of the people for their selfishness and their worldliness, and championed the cause of the poor. He began first to speak at Bethel, the center of the worship of the Northern Kingdom. The priest at Bethel ordered him to cease. He said, "Oh thou seer, go, flee thou away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: but prophesy not again any more at Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a royal house." But Amos refused. He spoke in still more severe tones and proclaimed judgment upon both the priests and the people. He was a man of courage like Luther, like John Knox, like Savonarola. His prophecies are given in a series of visions which contain the judgments of Jehovah upon various classes within the nation, upon the nation itself, and upon the surrounding nations.

"AT EASE IN ZION"

Amos 6 : 1

Elijah the prophet had spoken against the king. Elisha had prophesied on behalf of individuals and the nation. Jonah's message was to the people as a whole. The words of Amos are directed to a class, to the wealthy, who were free from worldly care but careless about justice and truth and mercy.

These men of wealth thought that they were secure. The country under King Jeroboam II had greatly prospered. The prophet speaks of their being "at ease in Zion." He means that they were satisfied and contented. They were satisfied with themselves. They did not care whether or not there was social injustice and political corruption, so long as they were not disturbed.

It is always dangerous to be "at ease in Zion." There is too much sorrow and pain and sin in the world for people to fold their hands and say, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace." There is such a thing as a holy discontent. There is also such a thing as an unmoral contentment. When things are wrong, it is our business to make them right. We must not say, "Let well enough alone." Things are not "well" when gambling destroys young men. Things are not "well" when drink robs homes of happiness and brings disease and death to helpless women and children. The prophet was rightly angry with the so-called well-to-do people who were "at ease in Zion." People who say: "I don't care, it's not my business. I must look out for myself," belong to the class of those who are "at ease in Zion." Because David Livingstone refused to be at ease, he gave his life for Africa; John Howard visited the darkest prisons in Europe; Frances Willard spent herself in driving strong drink from the land. The law of the gospel is "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

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AN ANCIENT STAIRCASE IN SAMARIA

THE EVIL DAY

Amos 6 : 2, 3

The prophet told the careless rich of the nation that their judgment was sure. They might think that they were putting far off the evil day, but as sure as God lived and loved truth, judgment would come upon them. It had come, the prophet said, upon other nations, and Israel could not escape.

The law of the harvest is as true for nations as it is for individuals. Whatsoever a nation or a people sow, that also it shall reap. This was the message which Rudyard Kipling gave in his well-known "Recessional" which every boy and girl should know.

The tumult and the shouting dies;
The captains and the kings depart;
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart:
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget.

Far called, our navies melt away;
On dune and headland sinks the fire;
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget.

The slave trade in America was wrong, but thousands said that the day of its cessation was far off. Nevertheless it was very near, and when Abraham Lincoln spoke about it in the midst of the sufferings of the Civil War, he said, "Yet if God wills that every drop of blood be drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

SINGERS OF IDLE SONGS

Amos 6 : 4-6

The prophet in these verses described the habits and thoughts of the people whose easy and godless lives were destroying the nation. It is a terrible picture, from which we turn our eyes away. (1) They were idle. Like the indolent peoples of foreign nations, they rested in ivory beds and sprawled on luxuriant couches. It is a picture of idleness and indolence. No people can endure that will not work. Satan always finds mischief for idle hands. There is nothing the people need to learn to-day more than the sacredness of work. (2) They were in love with luxury. They ate only the choicest dainties, "the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall." The tragedy of their luxury was that all the time poverty was making its suffering appeal to them and was unanswered. Their tables were spread for them in the very presence of the poor and while they overfed, the children of the poor starved. (3) They were vulgar. They sang idle songs to the sound of the viol and novel instruments of music as if they were David himself. It was true then as it is now that vulgarity lays claim to music and degrades it to its low purpose. David used music and song to elevate and uplift. These worthless rich used it to kill time and to stir their passions. This is as true to-day as it was then. Young people should shun songs that are idle and all so-called "jazz" music that never speaks of higher things and of the soul. (4) They were drunkards. One of the scholars of the Old Testament translates the words, "They drink wine by ewerfuls—waterpotfuls." They did not drink out of cups but from waterpots. It is a terrible picture of drunkenness. One of the leaders of the South African War who took part in the long siege of Ladysmith, once said: "I was with the relief column that moved on to Ladysmith. It was an extremely trying time from the heat of the weather. In that column of some thirty thousand men, the first who dropped out were not the tall men, or the short men, or the big men, or the little men—but the drinkers. They dropped out as clearly as if they had been labeled with a big letter on their backs." (5) They were careless. They did not care. "They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." The prophet meant that they were indifferent as to what happened to the nation. As long as they were secure they laughed at calamity. Like the priest and the Levite, they passed by on the other side.

In the end, rich and poor suffered alike in the national calamity.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Amos 6 : 7, 8

Such a condition of affairs could not go on forever. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "Therefore," says Amos the shepherd-prophet, "shall they now go captive with the first that go captive; and the revelry of them that stretched themselves shall pass away. The Lord Jehovah hath sworn by himself, saith Jehovah, the God of hosts: I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces; therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein."

There is an old saying to the effect that "God does not pay at the end of every day, but in the end he pays." The day of the Lord, which is his Judgment Day, may be long delayed, but it is not delayed forever. His judgments are sure. It was true for Israel. It is still true for us. All sins against God and all injustice toward our fellow men bring certain punishment. The gambler's wages, the drunkard's reward, the immoral man's compensation are sure. "The ordinances of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether." God is on his throne, and things that are wrong he must destroy, and things that are right he must preserve. A recent traveler in the West, in writing

of the steep grades on the mountains, says: "The railroad from Cripple Creek to Colorado Springs drops more than four thousand feet in forty miles. All along the line are signs marked 'Derailing Switch.' I asked the conductor the meaning. 'Why,' said he, 'if an engine should lose control of itself and come plunging down this fearful grade it might destroy a whole trainload of people below; so we are always ready to wire to the first derailing switch where the switchman will throw the engine into a ditch or against the rocks. It is better to destroy one train than two.'" God has often "derailed a nation" because it was dangerous among the nations of the earth. We have seen him do so in the case of Germany in our day. Let us then be careful.

"If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not thee in awe,
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the law:
Lord God of hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget."

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. Who was Amos and when did he prophesy?
2. What was the condition of Israel in the time of Amos?
3. Against what class of the people did Amos prophesy?
4. What were the sins of the nobility?
5. What punishment did the prophet predict?
6. Are there people who are now "at ease in Zion"?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 15. How did Jesus Christ die?

A. Jesus Christ died on the cross, the just for the unjust, that he might reconcile us to God and save us from sin.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. Why is the book of Amos called "A Cry for Justice"?
2. What charges did the prophet make against the nation?
3. Who were the greatest sinners among the people?
4. What is true patriotism?
5. Why is the message of Kipling's "Recessional" like the message of Amos?
6. How was Amos prepared for his great work?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 64. What is required in the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment requireth the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to every one in their several places and relations, as superior, inferiors, or equals.

Lesson XII—THE DOWNFALL OF ISRAEL

THE GOLDEN TEXT—"Righteousness exalteth a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people."—Prov. 14: 34.

TEXT OF LESSON, II Kings 17 : 9-18

For entire lesson, see II Kings 17 : 1-18

COMMON VERSION

9 And the children of Is'ra-el did secretly *those* things that *were* not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

10 And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree:

11 And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as *did* the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger:

12 For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

13 Yet the LORD testified against Is'ra-el, and against Ju'dah, by all the prophets, *and by* all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments *and* my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers,

AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE

9 And the children of Israel did secretly things that were not right against Jehovah their God: and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fortified city; 10 and they set them up pillars and Asherim upon every high hill, and under every green tree: 11 and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the nations whom Jehovah carried away before them; and they wrought wicked things to provoke Jehovah to anger; 12 and they served idols, whereof Jehovah had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. 13 Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants

and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

14 Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that *were* round about them, *concerning* whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them.

16 And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, *even* two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Ba'al.

17 And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Is'ra-el, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Ju'dah only.

the prophets. 14 Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their neck, like to the neck of their fathers, who believed not in Jehovah their God. 15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified unto them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and *went* after the nations that were round about them, concerning whom Jehovah had charged them that they should not do like them. 16 And they forsook all the commandments of Jehovah their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. 17 And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger. 18 Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

The Time—722 B.C. **The Place**—Samaria.

DAILY HOME READINGS

Date	Title	Reference
Monday, March 13	The Sin of Israel	II Kings 17 : 1-12.
Tuesday, March 14	The Judgment on Israel	II Kings 17 : 13-18.
Wednesday, March 15	The Deceptive Character of Sin	Hosea 7 : 1-10.
Thursday, March 16	The Downfall Foretold	Isa. 8 : 5-10.
Friday, March 17	A Dangerous Alliance	II Kings 16 : 1-9.
Saturday, March 18	Corrupting Worship	II Kings 16 : 10-18.
Sunday, March 19	"The Way of the Righteous"	Psalm 1.

DIFFICULT WORDS AND PHRASES

9. The tower of the watchmen. From the watchtower to the fortified city means from the most obscure vineyard which was guarded, to the centers of population. In a word, the entire country had been corrupted.

10. Pillars and Asherim. The Revised Version margin gives "obelisks" for "pillars." Reminders of the old, idolatrous worship of Canaan.

16. All the host of heaven. The stars. See Amos 5: 26; Deut. 4: 19; 17: 3. The worship of the planets was a form of heathen idolatry.

THE OVERTHROW OF ISRAEL

II Kings 17: 1-8

(These verses are not printed, but a study of them gives an idea of the history of the time.)

When Amos prophesied against the idolatry and luxury of Israel, Jeroboam II was on the throne. When he died, lawlessness broke loose and during the next seventeen years Israel had six kings, four of whom were murdered, and only one of whom was succeeded upon the throne by his son.

In the reign of King Menahem, 743 B.C., one of the greatest kings of Assyria, Tiglath-pileser, came to the throne. In 738 B.C. he invaded Israel and instead of fighting against the enemy, Menahem agreed to pay tribute to Assyria.

The people grew weary of paying tribute, and killed the new king Pekahiah, the son of Menahem, and his murderer, Pekah, was made king. The Assyrian king however returned, 734-733, and captured Israel and sent away into slavery tens of thousands of the people. Pekah in turn was murdered, and Hoshea, the last king of Israel, was crowned. Hoshea promised allegiance to Assyria and a large tribute.

Hoshea in turn proved false to his contract. When Tiglath-pileser died, Hoshea entered into a secret agreement with Egypt and refused to pay the tribute money. He had no money to pay. The new king of Assyria, Shalmaneser, invaded Israel, took King Hoshea prisoner, marched to Samaria, and after a terrible siege of three years, during which he died and his son Sargon became king, the citadel was captured and over twenty-seven thousand inhabitants were deported together with all the wealth of the nation. Thus ended the Kingdom of Israel. Their nation was destroyed and they were afterwards spoken of as the "Ten Lost

Tribes.'' They were swallowed up in the life of Assyria and the neighboring nations.

The Kingdom of Israel lasted from the time of Jeroboam I, 931 B.C., to the time of Hoshea, 722 B. C., a period of two hundred and nine years. The list of her kings includes, among others, Jeroboam, Ahab, Jehoram, Jehoash, Jeroboam II, Menahem, Pekah, and Hoshea. A few were loyal to Jehovah; the majority were evil and idolatrous and forgetful of God.

In the destruction of Israel, the greater part of the Jews were destroyed. Only Judah was left and during the next quarter we will study her history and her ultimate fall. It is a terrible thing to see a nation disappear. Nevertheless, history is full of stories of fallen nations. Assyria in her turn fell; Babylonia passed away. Greece with all her art fell into ruins, and Rome with her imperial power was destroyed.

Why was Israel destroyed? What was the reason that a great people trained to freedom and righteousness disappeared from the earth? The reason as given in the lesson is very simple. Israel forgot God and, forgetting God, she became impure and immoral, and weak. Her weakness became a temptation to Assyrian power, and Assyria robbed and destroyed her and grew rich upon her desolation. The words of the golden text contain the true explanation: ''Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.'' The prophet Amos in our last lesson predicted the fall of Israel because she neglected the poor, and those in power suffered injustice to go unpunished and unchecked.

''Shall crime bring crime for ever,
Strength aiding still the strong?
Is it thy will, O Father,
That man shall toil for wrong?
'No,' say thy mountains; 'No,' thy skies;
Man's clouded sun shall brightly rise,
And songs ascend instead of sighs;
God save the people!''

THE SIN OF IDOLATRY

II Kings 17: 9-12

The real sin of Israel was her neglect of God and her worship of idols. Jeroboam began by setting up his golden calves at Bethel and Dan. Ahab gave his full consent to Baal worship and against that worship Elijah, the prophet, issued his terrible warnings. Idolatry brought immorality and luxury and selfishness, and these things undermined the life of the nation. A recent writer says: ''We believe to-day that God works through the channels of law, whether physical, economic, social, or moral; and as we look at the fate of Belgium and France, for example, in the Great War, we are quite sure that all catastrophes are not the consequence of the victim's sins. Two different forces were at work here in two different realms of life, accomplishing two different results. Israel fell because her wealth excited the greed of Assyria, because she lay in the path of Assyria's conquering ambition; these were economic and political reasons that had no relation to Israel's deserts. But Israel fell in a deeper and more significant way—had, indeed, been falling for years before the final crash. Greed, materialism, and lust had destroyed national and individual character and substituted debasing Canaanite forms of worship for the ethical worship of Jehovah; for that reason her fall meant extinction. When the great catastrophe came, Israel had nothing worth saving—not an ideal nor a God. Assyria destroyed her political identity, but sin had already destroyed her soul.''

GOD'S NEGLECTED WARNING

II Kings 17: 13, 14

When the ruin of the nation came at last, there was no one to blame but the people themselves. The Bible makes that very clear, and our lessons have made it clear. ''Yet Jehovah testified unto Israel, and unto Judah, by every prophet, and every seer, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their neck, like to the neck of their fathers, who believed not in Jehovah their God.'' Elijah warned them and Amos warned them and told them plainly that God would bring ruin to the nation unless there were repentance and a change of life. Sometimes as we read this history we feel as if there were rejoicing over the overthrow of Israel. That is not the case. There is joy that evil is destroyed, that sin is found out, that injustice is punished, but God does not rejoice in punishment. He rejoices in mercy. He does not will that anyone should perish, but that everyone should come unto him and live.

Israel is not the only sinner against the light. We, too, have been warned. God is still calling all men to repent and be saved. The message of the gospel is heard from every pulpit. The Bible is open for all men to read. Jesus and his salvation are offered freely, but thousands still refuse to yield to him, and prefer to live godless, churchless, selfish lives. The well-known English preacher, Dr. W. L. Watkinson, tells this interesting story. ''Some time ago the newspapers related that a herd of cattle was being driven through a long, dark, wooden tubular bridge. Here and there in the planks were knot holes, which let in the sun in bars of light. The animals were afraid of these sun bars; they shied at them, were terrified at them, and then, leaping over them, made a painful hurdle race of it, coming out at the other end palpitating and exhausted. We act just as madly. The laws of God are golden rays in a dark path; they are for our guidance and infinite perfecting

and consolation, but they irritate us, they enrage us, we count them despotic barriers to liberty and happiness, and too often we put them under our feet.'' God warns us in order to save us.

FORSAKING GOD

II Kings 17: 15

The people of Israel not only refused to hear God's warnings through the prophets, but they deliberately forsook God, turned away from his laws, and imitated the heathen nations around them. These nations, among them Assyria and Egypt, were strong and powerful and warlike, and Israel was small and peace-loving, but envy of power and greatness led Israel to imitate what was evil. Greatness belongs to the soul and the mind and not to material things. A great nation is not the nation that has many warships and great armies. In that sense, Germany was very great. But how much greater was Belgium? If you think of it, many small nations have been great because of what they have done for the world. We think of Greece with her art, and Switzerland with her liberty, and Holland with her faith, and Scotland with her loyalty, and New England with her culture and her love of truth. The gospel advises us to imitate things that are good. We are to be imitators of Jesus and by trying to be like him, by always looking to him, we are changed into his likeness.

''A beautiful statue once stood in the market place of an Italian city. It was the statue of a Greek slave girl. It represented the slave as tidy and well-dressed.

''A ragged, uncombed, forlorn street child, coming across the statue in her play, stopped and gazed at it in admiration. She was captivated by it. She gazed long and lovingly. Moved by a sudden impulse, she went home and washed her face and combed her hair.

''Another day she stopped again before the statue and admired it, and she got a new idea. Next day her tattered clothes were washed and mended. Each time she looked at the statue she found something in its beauties until she was a transformed child.''

In this way we look unto Jesus and become like him.

FALSE AND CRUEL FAITHS

II Kings 17:16, 17

The worst evils that came to Israel came through the false faiths, the heathen religions which became strong in the land. The people of Israel by imitating foreign nations, adopted their religions. They not only worshiped the golden calves of Jeroboam, but all the idols of Baal, together with the stars and the planets. One thing led on to another, and in time they offered their children in sacrifice to the heathen god Moloch. This was the worship of the land of Moab. It is a terrible story. ''And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger.''

All heathen religions are cruel. Jesus said, ''Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.'' Heathen religions bring not rest, but disquiet. Buddhism leads to the distrust of life. Mohammedanism leads to cruelty to women. Hinduism burns widows on the graves of their husbands and casts little children into the Ganges. Paganism has always been hard and heartless. Israel turned away from the living God to the worship of heathen deities, and found sorrow and pain and death. How thankful we should be that as a nation we know the true God, and how careful we should be not to turn from him to serve the idols of the world or to imitate nations that love power more than they love God. The Arabs have a tradition to the effect that for a long time a little worm was gnawing the staff upon which King Solomon leaned until at last the staff broke and the great king fell. Of course the story means that the worm was gnawing not at the wood but at the life of the king. Evil was working at his heart and at last he fell. It is always so. The staff upon which men and nations lean is the Word and will of God. When a nation forgets God it is lost.

THE ANGER OF GOD

II Kings 17: 18

The closing words of the lesson are very sad: ''Therefore Jehovah was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight.'' That, in a word, tells the story of Israel's overthrow. God used Assyria to punish Israel. God was not angry with Israel herself, but with Israel in her sin. Israel would not separate herself from her sin. Israel identified herself with evil, with idolatry, with impurity, and God hated evil and impurity. As long as the people loved idols more than God, how could God love them? Sin always brings forth death. ''The wages of sin is death.'' Whatsoever we sow we reap. Some time ago the papers told the story of a floating mine which had been drifting on the waves for nearly a year when suddenly it struck the shore of Norway, doing great damage. It was a mine which had been placed in the sea during the Great War, but months after the War was ended and peace declared, this instrument of death which had been missed when the sea had been swept, still carried in secret its death-dealing penalty. It is so with sin. Sins of long ago, perhaps forgotten, have sown seed, the harvest of which must be reaped. Israel's long course of rebellion against God was like a floating mine which at last brought damage and destruction to the nation.

The only way to escape the penalty of sin is to

turn to God. God's mercy never fails those who seek him. If "the wages of sin is death," it is also true that the gift of God is eternal life. Let this then be our prayer.

"O great Absolver, grant my soul may wear
The lowliest garb of penitence and prayer,
That in the Father's courts my glorious dress
May be the garment of thy righteousness."

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. Who was the first king of Israel and who was the last?
2. What nation did God use to destroy Israel?
3. What happened to the last king of Israel?
4. Of what sins was Israel guilty?
5. Why was God angry with Israel?
6. Is the golden text suited to this lesson?

The Intermediate Catechism

Q. 16. When did Jesus Christ rise from the dead?

A. Jesus Christ rose from the dead the third day after his burial and, after forty days, ascended into heaven.

Q. 17. How will Jesus Christ come again?

A. Jesus Christ will come again with power and great glory, and will judge us all according to our works.

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. How long did the Kingdom of Israel continue?
2. What was the political reason for Israel's overthrow?
3. What was the real reason for Israel's downfall?
4. How did God try to save Israel?
5. Why did Israel refuse to obey God?
6. Of which of Israel's sins may we, too, be guilty?

The Shorter Catechism

Q. 65. What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment forbiddeth the neglecting of, or doing anything against, the honor and duty which belongeth to every one in their several places and relations.

Lesson XIII—REVIEW

**THE GOLDEN TEXT—"Jehovah is righteous in all his ways,
And gracious in all his works."
—Ps. 145 : 17.**

DEVOTIONAL READING, Psalm 130

DAILY HOME READINGS

Date	Title	Reference
Monday, March 20	The Revolt of Jeroboam	I Kings 12 : 12-20.
Tuesday, March 21	Elijah the Tishbite	I Kings 17 : 1-16.
Wednesday, March 22	Jehovah is God	I Kings 18 : 30-39.
Thursday, March 23	The Prophet's Reward	II Kings 2 : 1-11.
Friday, March 24	Elisha's Heavenly Defenders	II Kings 6 : 13-19.
Saturday, March 25	The Mercy of Jehovah	Jonah, ch. 3.
Sunday, March 26	The Forgiveness of Jehovah	Psalm 130.

REVIEW

The lessons during the past three months have given us the history of Israel. When we speak of Israel we mean the Northern Kingdom. There have been in all, twelve lessons. The first lesson was about the first king of Israel, Jeroboam. The next five lessons gave us a good idea of the life and work of Elijah. Then followed three lessons about Elisha the prophet. The next lesson was from the prophecy of Jonah, followed by a lesson from Amos. The last lesson was "The Downfall of Israel."

THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

The history covered by our lessons dates from 931 B.C. to 722 B.C., a period of two hundred and nine years. During the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, the Hebrew nation was a unity. It grew great and prospered. Solomon had had a brilliant and extravagant reign. The people loved liberty and Solomon had made their lives bitter with forced labor and heavy taxes. He had turned away from the pure and holy religion of his father David and had introduced foreign customs and foreign gods into the land. He himself married a heathen princess and the religion of Jehovah was neglected. There had always been a strained feeling between the south and the north. David and Solomon belonged to Judah and in their day they were strong enough to hold the people together, but when Solomon died, the people of the north demanded a larger share in the government. When Rehoboam, Solomon's son who was acknowledged king of Judah, refused to grant the people of the north the reforms which they demanded, they re-

belled and set up a separate kingdom. The foolishness of Rehoboam in refusing the just demands of the north led to the final rupture.

THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL

The story of how Jeroboam became the first king of the Northern Kingdom is very interesting. Jeroboam had been an obscure workman under Solomon, and because of his superior ability had been made foreman of the workers engaged upon the fortifications of Jerusalem. He was a capable and ambitious man. Ahijah the prophet tore into twelve pieces the new mantle that he was wearing and gave Jeroboam ten pieces, saying, "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee." Solomon heard of this prophecy and Jeroboam had to flee to Egypt. He returned after the death of Solomon and when the north rebelled, he was made king. It was he who introduced the golden calves into Israel and sowed the seed of the harvest of evil that later had to be reaped.

THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL

The lessons of the quarter have told more about the prophets than about the kings. In the two hundred and nine years during which the kingdom lasted, there were nineteen kings of Israel: Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea. During this same period we have studied in our lessons the work of five of the great prophets of Israel. Ahijah was the prophet in the reign of Jeroboam I. Elijah was the dominating spirit during the reign of Ahab. He fought Baal worship. He proclaimed Jehovah as the only living God. The five lessons about Elijah were "Elijah the Tishbite," "Elijah's Challenge of Baal Worship," "Elijah's Flight and Return," "Elijah in Naboth's Vineyard," and "Elijah Taken Up Into Heaven." The story of Elisha was of great interest. Elijah was like the storm. Elisha was like the springtime. The lessons about the prophets Jonah and Amos were instructive and revealed the social condition of Israel. Jonah called Nineveh to repentance, and himself learned that God cares for all men and all nations. Amos revealed the truth that God cares for all classes of people, poor as well as rich.

THE LAST KING OF ISRAEL

The history of the last king of Israel was contained in last week's lesson. Hoshea first paid tribute to Assyria and when he tried to break away from Assyria, by forming an alliance with Egypt, the king of Assyria swept down upon Israel and after three years of war and siege, destroyed Samaria, the capital, robbed the nation of its wealth, and carried off the inhabitants of the land into exile.

Assyria, the great power on the east, was jealous of Egypt on the south, and Israel lay between, and as long as she was independent and free to join with Egypt, Assyria was ill at ease. But other causes lay at the root of Israel's trouble. She had lost her religion and her morals. She had forgotten God and turned to idols. She had sold her soul. One king after the other followed in the footsteps of Jeroboam, who is always spoken of as the man "who made Israel to sin."

LESSONS FROM HISTORY

1. A bad start meant for Israel a bad ending. The first king began wrong. He established calf worship at Bethel and Dan. The kings that succeeded him followed in the steps of his idolatry. Let us be sure we follow a good leader. Let us make Jesus our Leader.

2. God gave Israel frequent warnings. Each one of the prophets called men back to God. We have only ourselves to blame if we go on in sin. To us God has sent Jesus, and we have his message and his cross.

3. God uses heathen nations to do his will. Assyria was not a good nation. She was proud and cruel, but God used her for a while to do his will. "The earth is Jehovah's" and all nations are under his control.

4. "The wages of sin is death." In the end the seed which Jeroboam sowed bore its harvest. It took two hundred years, however, for the harvest to ripen. We reap what we sow. If we sow "unto the Spirit," we will "of the Spirit reap eternal life."

5. Religion decides the fate not only of men but of nations. While Israel was true to God she was strong. When she forsook God she fell. It is still true. When Germany trusted in force and forgot God she fell from her high place.

FOR INTERMEDIATE PUPILS

1. Name the kings of the Northern Kingdom.
2. Name the prophets of the Northern Kingdom.
3. What was the message of Elijah to Israel?
4. What was the message of Elisha to Israel?
5. What became of the Kingdom of Israel?
6. Why was Israel destroyed?

FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

1. Compare Elijah and Elisha.
2. Who was the worst of the kings of Israel?
3. What was the message of Jonah to Nineveh? What did Jonah himself learn?
4. What was the message of Amos to Israel?
5. What became of the Kingdom of Israel?
6. What warnings did God give Israel?

ORDERS OF SERVICE FOR FIRST QUARTER, 1922[1]

Order of Service, No. 1

Doors Closed.

The Doxology.—"Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Silent Prayer.—(All standing.)

Doors Opened.

Hymn.—"Alleluia," No. 51. "The King of Love My Shepherd Is."

Opening Sentences:

Supt.—Oh give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good;
For his lovingkindness endureth for ever.
Pupils.—Let them now that fear Jehovah say,
That his lovingkindness endureth for ever.
Supt.—Jehovah is my strength and song;
And he is become my salvation.
Pupils.—The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous.
Supt.—Open to me the gates of righteousness:
I will enter into them, I will give thanks unto Jehovah.
Pupils.—This is the gate of Jehovah;
The righteous shall enter into it.
Supt.—The stone which the builders rejected
Is become the head of the corner.
Pupils.—This is Jehovah's doing;
It is marvellous in our eyes.
Supt.—This is the day which Jehovah hath made;
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
Pupils.—Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.
Supt.—Thou art my God, and I will give thanks unto thee:
Thou art my God, I will exalt thee.
All.—Oh give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good;
For his lovingkindness endureth for ever.

The Apostles' Creed.—(All standing.)

Hymn.—"Alleluia," No. 100. "O Word of God Incarnate."

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The Lord's Prayer.

Hymn.—"Alleluia," No. 16. "Praise the Lord: Ye Heavens Adore Him."

Opening Sentences:

Supt.—Oh sing unto Jehovah a new song;
For he hath done marvellous things:
School.—His right hand, and his holy arm, hath wrought salvation for him.
Supt.—Make a joyful noise unto Jehovah, all the earth:
Boys.—Break forth and sing for joy, yea, sing praises.
Girls.—Sing praises unto Jehovah with the harp;
With the harp and the voice of melody.
Teachers.—Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;
The world, and they that dwell therein.
Supt.—Let the floods clap their hands;
Let the hills sing for joy together.
All.—Before Jehovah; for he cometh to judge the earth:
He will judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with equity.

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